AFRICA RECOVERY

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World Education Forum sets Africa as a priority

Dakar summit urges renewed global drive to achieve basic education for all

By Ernest Harsch
Dakar

As a fundamental building block for development and peace in Africa, education must become available to all the continent's people, especially girls, declared participants in the World Education Forum, held 26-28 April in Senegal's capital. The conference should serve as a "cry of distress" about girls' low enrolment rates, asserted Mrs. Viviane Wade, Senegal's first lady, who vowed to help forge a global "women's alliance for the right of women to education." Reinforcing the message, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched a new UN initiative to promote girls' education. "Educating girls is a social development policy that works," he said.

More broadly, the conference's "Dakar Framework for Action" declares that education is not only "the key to sustainable development," but also "a fundamental human right." It states that by 2015 all children must have access to and be able to complete primary school. It also urges the elimination of gender disparities in access to primary and secondary education by 2005 and a 50 per cent improvement in adult literacy levels by 2015. In setting those goals, the conference reaffirmed the priorities set at the 1990 Education for All conference in Jomtien, Thailand, but extended the timetable for achieving them.

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In the decade since Jomtien, most developing regions have made marked progress in improving school enrolment rates. Sub-Saharan Africa, however, achieved only modest gains (see article, page 12). Although 17 million more African children are in school today than a decade ago, 42 million have never been in school, out of 113 million worldwide, according to estimates by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the main coordinator of the Education for All campaign. "We are still a far cry from basic education for all," UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura acknowledged. "It is still but a distant dream for hundreds of millions of children, women and men."

Classroom in Mauritania. Educating girls is a "long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return," said Secretary-General Kofi Annan, launching new UN initiative for girls' education.

Because of the uneven progress across regions, the Dakar Framework recognizes that "the challenge of education for all is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia and in the least developed countries."

Significant improvements in education also are vital for Africa to take advantage of new technologies and opportunities, declared Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Without adequate education, he said, "we cannot even begin to think of becoming part of the knowledge-driven, information-conscious, high-tech controlled and economically competitive world of the 21st century." Urging the international community in particular to provide greater support to Africa's educational efforts, he maintained that only then can globalization "begin to have meaning and relevance for Africa and Africans."

Constraints and dilemmas

Together with their counterparts from other parts of the world, African ministers, educators, donor officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) spent much of the conference debating the constraints and dilemmas hindering the goal of

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Mixed progress for African women

Review of Beijing conference finds both gains and reverses

By ***Colleen Lowe Morna***

The mid-decade review of the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women found Africa at a precarious crossroads. Thanks largely to the pressure of African women who have become adept at organizing both within and across borders, some important gains have been made on the legal and political front, concluded the review, held in New York in June. Several countries have revised their constitutions to enshrine gender equality. Southern African countries have achieved a higher representation of women in decision-making than in the Americas and Europe. And innovative policy work spreading across the continent — such as introducing gender considerations into budget debates — is attracting international interest.

Yet, as revealed by a statistical analysis on the "Status of Women in Africa" launched by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at the conference, the majority of African women are materially worse off today than they were five years ago. Increasing poverty, unrelenting conflict and the frightening spread of HIV/AIDS — all of which have a disproportionate impact on women because of their secondary position in society — are reversing the fragile social and economic gains they had made. The ECA argues that if gender equality had been achieved — if women were able to participate equally in the economy, had a real say in matters of war and peace and had the power to insist on safe sex — all three of these scourges would be less serious.

At the conference, known as "Beijing+5," representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as official delegates expressed frustration that while governments are talking the talk of gender equality, they are not yet walking the walk. Speaking at the launch of the "Progress of the World's Women 2000" report of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Uganda's outspoken Vice-President Specioza Kazibwe — Africa's highest ranking woman politician — lamented "the omission in the report of the most important indicator of all — political commitment."

Economic conditions for many African women are worse than five years ago, despite some progress on policies.

Ms. Kazibwe said she was in office only because of the political commitment to gender equality shown by President Yoweri Museveni. She stirred ripples at the conference by calling for "gender-positive men," whom she defined in an interview as men "who look at things with a gender-oriented eye and make things happen."

Commitments mainly on paper

The head of the ECA's African Centre for Women (ACW), Ms. Josephine Ouédraogo, criticized the conference's format, characterized by formal government statements in the plenary and a bitter wrangle over sexual rights in the corridors and closed-door negotiations. "This should have been an accountability forum," the former minister from Burkina Faso said in an interview. "Heads of state should have come to report and to respond to critical questions from stakeholders and non-governmental organizations."

Ms. Ouédraogo maintains that the key reason why gender equality in Africa is still only on paper is that gender structures remain marginal and the same casts of characters (mainly women) come to regional and global conferences. "We are talking to ourselves," she said. "We are still not working in the mainstream — targeting the ministers of finance, trade, agriculture, the people who make policies critical to the achievement of gender equality."

The preparatory Sixth African Regional Conference on Women convened by the ECA last November broke new ground by accrediting NGOs as full delegates and inviting heads of state and ministers from core ministries. The conference recommended that in future one third of all participants at gender conferences be men.

Some progress in Africa

The analysis of country reports undertaken by the ACW for the preparatory conference shows that there have been some important positive developments, for example:

- Uganda, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Namibia, Morocco, Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar have reviewed their constitutions to make them more gender sensitive. Burkina Faso has repealed a law that prohibits public promotion of contraceptives, while the requirement in Morocco that wives obtain authorization to enter the work force has been repealed. The Kenya Human Rights Task Force has recommended revisions to draft legislation on marriage, divorce, matrimonial property and the rights of children, emphasizing the principle of equality of spouses. Female genital mutilation has been outlawed in Djibouti, Kenya and Ghana.
- NGOs in South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia have launched reviews to examine their country's budgets from a gender perspective. These experiences are being shared globally through an initiative of the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Heads of state of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have gone beyond global and continental

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commitments to sign a Declaration on Gender and Development, in which they have undertaken to have 30 per cent of decision-making positions occupied by women by the end of 2000. Three countries, South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles, already are close to reaching this target. They rank among the top 10 globally in the proportion of women in parliament (only the Scandinavian countries have reached 30 per cent). On average, 18 per cent of parliamentarians in Southern Africa are women, compared with 15 per cent in Europe and the Americas.

But also many shortfalls

However, the country reports also show numerous shortcomings, including:

- Overall, women make up 9 per cent of parliamentarians in Africa, compared with the global average of 13.4 per cent. More needs to be done to increase women's representation and effective participation in other areas, including the judiciary, executive, administration, private sector and even civil society organizations.
- There have been few systematic efforts by African countries to ensure that all provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international legal instruments on women's rights are enacted into law. Only two African countries, Senegal and Namibia, have ratified CEDAW's Optional Protocol, which allows women to seek remedy for human rights abuses directly with the UN.
- The existence in most African countries of customary law alongside modern legal systems means that, in reality, the majority of African women remain legal minors all their lives: first under their fathers, then under their husbands and finally under a son or other male guardian.
- Despite the fragile economic gains made by Africa over the last five years, absolute poverty is increasing, especially for women. With a drop in per capita spending on education and the introduction of "user fees," the proportion of girls dropping out of school in Africa is growing, even while their initial enrolment is increasing. About 25 per cent of African women are employed in the informal sector, mainly in small-scale trading. With the loss of formal sector jobs as a result of structural adjustment programmes promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the informal sector has been absorbing increasing numbers of both men and women. Women's lack of access to credit, information and technical advice prevents them from expanding their enterprises. Eighty per cent of the economically active African female labour force is employed in agriculture. Women rarely own land, have access to agricultural extension services or obtain credit. Economic policies heavily emphasize export crops, which are mostly controlled by men. Women lend their labour to these enterprises without reaping the benefits.
- In Africa, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is sweeping through the continent, with a harsh bias against women. Research in West and Central Africa shows that for cultural and economic reasons, women feel unable to refuse sexual advances of partners even when they know that they risk infection. Poverty has pushed increasing numbers of women into sex work, in which HIV infection rates are as high as 20 per cent. Young girls are at great risk due to traditional practices, sexual abuse, forced marriage, prostitution and the myth that infected men can be cured by having sex with a virgin. Women have the added risk of passing on the disease to their unborn babies. Women and girls often have to care for the growing number of AIDS orphans.
- Conflicts affect one-fifth of Africa's 700 million people. These wars have had devastating effects on civilians, especially women and children, who constitute 80 per cent of refugees. They also have experienced a shocking increase in the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Several countries have revised their constitutions to enshrine gender equality. Southern African countries have achieved a higher representation of women in decision-making than in the Americas and Europe.

Ugandan Vice-President Specioza Kazibwe: More political commitment is needed.

The preparatory Sixth African Regional Conference on Women devised a Regional Action Plan 2000-2004 to accelerate implementation of the 1994 Dakar African Platform for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action. HIV/AIDS, which did not feature in the earlier documents, is highlighted as a priority. The new plan also calls on all African governments to remove reservations to CEDAW and sign the Optional Protocol. Noting that far too much effort has been spent on lobbying and advocacy, and not enough on implementation, the plan emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluation, and of developing suitable indicators for doing so.

Weak language and vague targets

African NGOs alleged that disarray and poor caucusing among the official African delegates led to weak language in the "Outcome" document on the priority issues for Africa, especially on HIV/AIDS. They also were critical of the failure of Beijing+5 to come up with more tangible targets and yardsticks than those found in the Beijing Platform for Action.

African delegations, especially those from SADC, fought hard for more specific language in the document. Namibian delegation head Nentumbo Ndaitwah insisted that all legislation discriminating against women be scrapped by 2005. Some countries objected, so the compromise text reads: "as soon as possible, preferably by 2005."

Other concrete targets set by Beijing+5 endorse those adopted by the Copenhagen Social Summit on closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and ensuring free, compulsory and universal primary education for girls and boys by 2015.

Overall, Ms. Ouédraogo says that the "Outcome" document adopted at Beijing+5 is a valuable tool. "Every African country," she says, "can find itself somewhere in the document. What is important now is to take this document home and translate it into meaningful measures at a country level." As an immediate follow-up to the conference, she said the ECA is designing mechanisms to monitor implementation of all the commitments African governments have made to advance gender equality. ■

Nigerian women target gender violence

Advocacy and human rights groups launch public campaign

By **Michael Fleshman**

In Lagos, a 15-year-old girl answers a knock on her door and finds herself doused with acid by a former boyfriend. She dies several days later, horribly disfigured. In the Niger Delta oil fields, soldiers enter the village of Choba after a gun battle and rape 60 women. Authorities deny that the incident occurred even after a photo of the assaults appear in a national newspaper and interviews with victims are broadcast on national television. In the northern city of Kaduna, a man whips his wife with a cane after an argument over household finances. The woman cannot file a complaint because no offence has been committed. Section 55 of the penal code allows a husband to beat his wife as long as "grievous hurt" is not inflicted — regulating, but not criminalizing, this form of domestic violence.

Michael Fleshman

Ms. Tolulope Lewis: "Violence against women cannot be separated from the broader issues of women's economic and social standing."

These examples, drawn from the case files of Nigerian women's and human rights organizations, offer a glimpse into the social, traditional and political foundations of what Ms. Tolulope Lewis, a representative of a leading Nigerian non-governmental women's organization, Baobab for Women's Human Rights, described as an "epidemic of violence" against women. Speaking to *Africa Recovery* in New York, Ms. Lewis said that discriminatory customary practices, a constitutional and legal framework inherited from previous military governments and a blanket of silence surrounding domestic violence in particular have left women extraordinarily vulnerable to rape and assault. "It's no use going to the police," she said. "They say it's a private matter [between the man and the woman] that doesn't concern them. Sometimes they just ask the woman, 'what did you do to deserve this?'"

Government efforts to curb gender violence were half-hearted at best under the military government of General Sani Abacha, who seized power in November 1993 and ruled until his death in 1998. After the creation of an official Human Rights Commission in 1995 the government conducted two national workshops on the causes of violence and announced plans to establish legal aid and counselling centres for the victims. But the programmes enjoyed little credibility among Nigerian human rights and women's organizations and received little political or financial support from a regime that quickly became notorious for its repression.

UNIFEM initiative

With assistance from the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Nigerian women have seized on the country's transition to democracy to launch an ambitious campaign against gender violence. The programme includes legal and social services for victims and their families, sensitivity training for law enforcement and government officials and community-based education activities aimed particularly at young people. UNIFEM and the Nigerian non-governmental Women's Centre for Peace and Development launched the project, Social Advocacy Against Violence Against Women (SAAVAW), in late 1998, with funds from UNIFEM's Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

SAAVAW conducted the first of two workshops on gender violence in August 1998, drawing heavily on drama, song and dance to highlight the impact of gender violence on women and their families. SAAVAW activists also established Peace and Anti-Violence Education clubs in six secondary schools around the country. The clubs organize local activities to challenge stereotypes of women that foster violence and bring boys and girls together to develop ways to end gender violence in their communities.

The SAAVAW project formally concluded in July 1999 with a national conference on media reporting of gender violence and the launch of a new national non-governmental organization, Project Alert, to combat gender violence through education, research and advocacy. Project Alert is the first organization in Nigeria devoted exclusively to eradicating violence against women, and is intended to augment and coordinate the ongoing women's empowerment, counselling, and legal assistance programmes of other agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

'Now the women are moving'

No one, however, is claiming an early victory. Ms. Bolanle Asimolowo, a representative of the Lagos-based Civil Liberties Organization, told *Africa Recovery* that despite significant improvements in respect for human and civil rights by the elected government of President Olusegun Obasanjo, "for women things are not very much different. We still have a long way to go."

Part of the difficulty, said Ms. Lewis, is the virtual absence of women in the new local, state and national legislatures. Just three of Nigeria's 109 senators are women, while only 12 women were elected to the 350-member House of Representatives. Nationally, fewer than 2 per cent of all elected officials are women, making it difficult to put women's issues on the country's political agenda.

"Violence against women cannot be separated from the broader issues of women's economic and social standing in the country," she noted, "and there is still a feeling that women cannot be leaders. We're encouraging women and men to see that women have their contribution to make to the democracy. We are speaking up now to break the silence. We have far to go, but now the women are moving." ■

Women in Nigeria

Life expectancy (years)	52 (men 49)
Infant mortality (per '000 live births)	77 (boys 85)
Girls in primary or secondary school (% age group)	61 (boys 77)
Teenage girls ever married (%)	36
Households headed by women (%)	14
Management positions held by women (%)	6
Women ever physically abused by domestic partner (%)	31
Prevalence of female genital mutilation (%)	50

Source: UN, World's Women 2000, Trends and Statistics

Debt relief moves at a snail's pace

Conflicts and poverty-reduction negotiations slow HIPC implementation

By **Christina Katsouris**

The heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative, designed to reduce the debt of the world's poorest countries, ran into problems in May when some creditors postponed further debt reduction for Uganda, the first country to qualify under the enhanced HIPC programme for additional relief. Some creditors are citing its armed conflict with Rwandan troops in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

The postponement was imposed by the Paris Club of bilateral creditor governments but could also delay relief due from multilateral creditors. It is likely to fuel more criticism from anti-debt campaigners who argue that the Paris Club is reneging on HIPC terms for Uganda at a time when creditors are already behind schedule in approving debt relief for other countries. Creditors have so far announced only five new deals this year, far short of the 11 they had planned to approve by the April meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In early May, the Bank and the Fund announced that Uganda had "fulfilled the conditions" for reaching completion — the point at which creditors are supposed to finalize writing off a country's debt stock under HIPC. The announcement called on creditors to waive a nominal $1.3 bn, or $656 mn in net present value (NPV), the discounted value of debt if it were repaid in a lump sum. Under normal circumstances, Uganda would have then met other creditors, including representatives of the 19-member Paris Club, and finalized arrangements for reducing its debt. However, the Club cancelled a mid-May meeting and has set no new date for discussions.

"Creditors are worried about the Ugandan government's involvement in conflict with Rwanda ... there are new tensions in this conflict," a Paris Club source told *Africa Recovery*. "Bilateral creditors are waiting for a clear assessment of the likely impact of the conflict."

Changing the rules?

Debt lobbyists have criticized the postponement, arguing that the Paris Club is changing the rules after Uganda fulfilled all HIPC's conditions. It has implemented the required macroeconomic reforms, put poverty reduction policies in place and instituted a transparent and democratic system for investing savings from debt relief.

"The Paris Club doesn't have the right to do this," says Mr. Tony Burden of Oxfam International. "Uganda has developed a national strategy with the participation of civil society. It has transparency, even on defence expenditure." The call for transparency is intended to ensure that all savings from debt relief are spent on poverty eradication.

"Full debt relief will only be possible after 18 months. If we do it properly, a final decision will be made and we will receive full debt relief."

— President Benjamin Mkapa, Tanzania

UN / Eddy Praet

The Paris Club believes that withholding debt relief could encourage Uganda to stop fighting. It fears that any escalation of the conflict would force the government to spend more on defence and put debt relief savings at risk. "It could be difficult to avoid funding a military build-up if the funds were released," a Scandinavian official told *Africa Recovery*. "We don't want to fuel armed conflict," noted another Paris Club source.

Others feel the creditors should use different means to restrain the conflict. "Uganda is heavily reliant on aid. Donors could use this to discourage further engagement," one debt lobbyist maintains.

Protracted delay by the Paris Club could put the World Bank and IMF in a difficult position. Having approved Uganda's completion, they are committed to reducing its debt stock, although technically they could withhold relief since HIPC requires the simultaneous participation of all creditors, according to a Washington source.

The delay by the Paris Club also reinforces concern over the time it will take other countries to get debt reduced under the enhanced HIPC. The programme was modified in September 1999 — after its initial launch in 1996 — in order to give faster relief to countries completing the required reforms. It also provides for deeper relief and should make more countries eligible for debt reduction. Some 40 countries could now potentially qualify, 32 of them in Africa.

Under the original HIPC, a country's debt was considered "sustainable" at 200-240 per cent of exports or 280 per cent of fiscal revenues. In most cases, debt would have been reduced only after six years. First, countries had to implement structural adjustment policies for three years to reach a "decision point" when creditors approved the amount of debt that would be reduced at the completion of the process. To reach completion point, a country had to sustain the reforms for a further three years.

HIPC-2, as the enhanced initiative is known, lowered the sustainability ratio to 150 per cent of exports and 250 per cent of fiscal revenues and strengthened links between debt relief and poverty reduction. The enhanced plan requires countries to implement reforms for three years and to draw up democratically

HIPC's changing criteria

	HIPC-1	HIPC-2
Debt* sustainability ratios		
debt/exports	200-250%	150%
debt/revenues	280%	250%
GDP-related ratios		
exports/GDP	40%	30%
revenues/GDP	20%	15%
Time until actual relief	6 years	uncertain**

* *Measured in "net present value" terms (the discounted market value of debt if repaid in one lump sum)*

** *Conditions now include drawing up a poverty reduction strategy paper with civil society participation, having it endorsed by the IMF and World Bank and then implementing it over an approved period of time.*

Source: UN Africa Recovery from IMF, World Bank

agreed poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) before reaching decision point.

Accent on poverty reduction

Debtors can now reach completion once they have implemented PRSPs and other specific macroeconomic policies for at least a year. In theory, the fastest reformers should have their debt reduced more quickly than before. HIPC-2 also requires creditors to provide interim relief by reducing debt service (payments of interest and principle) between decision and completion. Bilateral creditors also agreed to write off up to 90 per cent of each country's debt, and more if necessary.

In late June, the IMF and World Bank deemed that Senegal, which had not been eligible under HIPC-1, now qualifies, since its debt is higher than both of the new sustainability ratios and its policy performance is considered satisfactory, including the drafting of an interim poverty reduction strategy paper. Although Senegal may not reach the completion point until the end of 2001, the World Bank agreed to begin providing interim debt relief this 1 July. The total HIPC-2 package following completion will reach around $800 mn.

Countries that received debt relief under HIPC-1 now also must devise and implement poverty reduction strategies in order to obtain additional relief under HIPC-2. So far, only Uganda has reached the completion point under the enhanced HIPC, after having $347 mn written off under HIPC-1 in April 1998.

Mozambique had $1.7 bn in debt waived under HIPC-1 in June 1999. It reached decision point under HIPC-2 in April 2000, entitling it to a further $254 mn in relief once it has finalized and implemented its poverty reduction strategy for at least a year. This will take some time since the government only recently began its dialogue with civil society.

Tanzania reached decision point in April when creditors announced plans to write off $2 bn in NPV terms, the largest deal so far, to reduce the country's debt by 40 per cent. Tanzania also has some way to go before completing its poverty reduction strategy. President Benjamin Mkapa anticipates, "Full debt relief will only be possible after 18 months. If we do it properly, a final decision will be made and we will receive full debt relief."

The World Bank admits that the requirement for poverty reduction is delaying relief. "The principal reason [for the delays] is the effort being put into the poverty reduction strategy papers," said World Bank President James Wolfensohn during the Bank's April meeting. "Governments are engaged in a consultative process with the people of those countries to see how they are going to use the funding that is saved. That is what is holding things up."

Mr. Wolfensohn said the Bank would discuss the problem with HIPC finance ministers, but stressed that it was nonetheless worth persisting with the strategies. "It is better to have a good poverty reduction strategy and one that is socially purposeful." Some debt lobbyists agree that time should be invested in perfecting the strategies, but say that maximum interim debt relief should be given between the decision and completion points. "We would prefer creditors to allow a country to pay debt service as if the debt stocks had been cancelled before they are actually cancelled on completion," says one.

In other cases, relief has been delayed by conflict situations. Rwanda was originally scheduled for a decision in the final quarter of 2000, but action is likely to be postponed because of conflict with neighbours. Ethiopia was one of the first countries to be considered for a HIPC deal back in 1996, but has not moved forward because of its war with Eritrea.

Other countries have fallen behind schedule because they have not implemented the necessary reforms. Mali was due to complete under HIPC-1 this year but could be delayed for these reasons. Burkina Faso is scheduled to reach completion point under HIPC-1 this year. Both countries will qualify under the original HIPC, before moving on to HIPC ^, so as get some relief before having to complete the poverty reduction papers for HIPC-2. Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi and Zambia are scheduled to reach a decision point over the next few months. ■

Funding pressures

Debt lobbyists plan to press creditors to abandon HIPC's current formula for calculating relief, in order to increase the amount of debt reduction. "Debt relief should be calculated on the basis of how much is needed to achieve specific poverty reduction targets rather than on predetermined debt to export and fiscal ratios," says Mr. Mark Farmener of Christian Aid. Many lobbyists plan to promote this new approach in July when the Group of 7 (US, UK, France, Germany, Japan, Canada and Italy) has its next summit in Japan.

It could prove an uphill task. Most bilateral creditors believe that they have done enough. The G7 has in principle agreed to write off 100 per cent of bilateral debt, although some of these packages may not be as generous as they appear. France and Japan, the largest bilateral creditors, have slipped caveats into their terms. According to Secretary of State for Trade François Huwart, France will write off 100 per cent of debt through "refinancing by gifts" of debt due to France. "In practice, countries will repay the amounts due and France will then proceed to give them gifts of a corresponding amount in order to finance projects."

Some see this as a novel variant of "tied aid," in which assistance is designed to boost a donor's domestic industries and services. However, French officials claim it will encourage participation and transparency. Projects will be chosen in collaboration with governments and local non-governmental organizations and the system will force governments to show how money saved through debt relief is spent. Japan has indicated that it will curtail further development assistance for countries choosing to have Japanese aid debt written off, prompting Ghana, which relies heavily on Japanese assistance, to consider rejecting a HIPC deal.

Some creditors, such as the UK, have already agreed to waive 100 per cent of debt service for each HIPC country between the decision and completion points. Many may also supplement the contributions of poorer multilateral institutions, such as the African Development Bank, to enable them to provide their share of debt relief. According to the World Bank, bilateral creditors now have committed $2.4 bn to the HIPC Trust Fund. "We now have enough pledges in the Trust Fund to move ahead on the 20 countries we hope to approve by the end of the year," a World Bank spokesman told *Africa Recovery*. The largest pledges are from the US ($600 mn), the UK ($280 mn), Germany ($252 mn) and France ($199 mn).

Some pledges, as in the case of the US contribution, will take time to convert into debt relief. After the US Congress agreed to appropriate about $70 mn in June, creditors seem resigned to accepting that it will vote funding on an "as-needed" basis, rather than in annual $200 mn tranches as they had hoped. However, NGOs worry that such US foot-dragging could jeopardize the overall initiative. Nevertheless, World Bank officials remain hopeful that creditors will be able to convert their pledges to actual debt relief in time to meet the needs of African HIPCs.

Sierra Leone: peacekeeping under fire

UN mission short on trained forces, equipment, global backing

By **Michael Fleshman**

UN forces in Freetown after several peacekeepers were killed and several hundred were briefly captured by rebels in early May.

AFP CORBIS

The repudiation of the nearly year-old peace agreement in Sierra Leone by rebel forces reignited the country's long civil conflict and thrust the UN peacekeeping mission into a war for which it was neither mandated nor equipped. Some observers, particularly in developed countries, were highly critical of the operation, arguing that the UN was naive to trust the rebels' commitment to peace and negligent in deploying poorly trained and lightly armed troops.

The record, however, shows that senior UN officials and the Security Council were fully aware of the challenges awaiting the organization's peacekeepers in Sierra Leone and that Secretary-General Kofi Annan had repeatedly sought — but did not obtain — the resources required from member states to meet those challenges.

When rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked UN personnel on 1 May, the peace agreement collapsed. Within days, nearly 500 peacekeepers in the RUF-controlled north and east had themselves been disarmed and seized. The under-strength UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) retreated to defensive positions around the capital, Freetown.

As of early July, additional UNAMSIL troops have arrived. RUF leader Foday Sankoh is in government custody as the UN considers a government request for a tribunal to try him for war crimes. Fighting between rebels and government and UNAMSIL troops continues, while the international community is debating how — and with whom — to restart the peace process.

Early doubts

UN officials had expressed strong reservations about aspects of the Sierra Leone peace agreement from the outset. The agreement had been intended to end a brutal civil war that began in 1991 between the RUF and the Sierra Leone government, with the latter supported by a Nigerian-led regional force, the Economic Community of West African States' Military Observer Group (ECOMOG). A statement eventually led West African leaders to initiate a process of negotiations, resulting in the signing on 7 July 1999 of a peace accord in Lomé, Togo. It provided for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of rebel forces, the formation of a government of national unity and new elections under international supervision. Although the UN was not a direct party to the talks that produced the accord, the agreement called for a UN monitoring role alongside ECOMOG. In return, Mr. Sankoh was made vice-president, and, together with his soldiers, pardoned for human rights abuses committed during the war.

While the UN Secretary-General welcomed the end of the war, he explicitly expressed reservations about one aspect of the accord: a blanket pardon granted the rebels for human rights abuses committed during the war. These included chopping off the arms of some 100,000 people and the forced recruitment of child soldiers. Mr. Annan said that the UN would not be bound by that part of the accord, since the pardons "shall not apply to international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law."

Less than a month later, when the rebels detained the first UN observers, Mr. Annan reported to the Security Council that there had been "serious challenges" to the agreement. When ECOMOG announced that it would have to reduce its military presence in Sierra Leone, Mr. Annan then requested member states to provide for a fully fledged peacekeeping mission of some 6,000 military personnel. He cautioned that "in view of the volatility of the security situation in Sierra Leone and the fragility of the peace process, the United Nations force should be large and capable, and should operate on the basis of robust rules of engagement."

The military capability of UNAMSIL took on added importance in late December 1999 when ECOMOG announced that it would shortly withdraw its forces entirely. The absence of international financial and logistical support for ECOMOG, West African political leaders said, meant that the region could no longer afford to maintain its costly presence there.

"Credible" force sought

The withdrawal of all regional forces and increasing rebel violations of the peace agreement, Mr. Annan told the council in January 2000, made it vital that UNAMSIL, "through its military presence, military capabilities and posture be able to deter attempts to derail the peace process." To achieve that, he noted, "a sizable and militarily credible United Nations force would be required." He recommended

that UNAMSIL's military component be increased to 11,100, with a broader mandate to ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN and humanitarian personnel, protect civilians at risk of attack and assume security functions previously performed by the departing West African peacekeepers.

Military capabilities again dominated the Security Council debate on 7 February. Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hedi Annabi informed the council that some battalions had arrived to join UNAMSIL without essential equipment. This lack of preparedness had compromised their effectiveness and led to instances in January in which large numbers of peacekeepers were disarmed by rebel forces. The RUF leader, Mr. Annabi also noted, had instructed his forces not to allow UNAMSIL troops into rebel-controlled areas. Nevertheless, Mr. Annabi said ECOMOG's withdrawal meant that the UN needed to accelerate the deployment of additional peacekeeping units in rebel-held areas "despite the substantial risks in doing so."

It was a risk the Security Council chose to take, voting unanimously to expand the size and mandate of the mission. UK Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock told the council that because of the difficulties being encountered by UNAMSIL personnel, "troop contributors must ensure that their troops are of a high standard, ready and able to meet the challenges that they face."

It would be other countries' soldiers who would have to meet those challenges, however. None of the permanent Security Council members, including those with the world's largest and best-equipped armed forces, offered to contribute military contingents to UNAMSIL. Instead, the UN utilized troops made available by developing countries, including some of the world's poorest, which lack the training, equipment and logistical support of the armies of major powers.

When RUF forces started taking UN captives this May, UNAMSIL remained far short of its authorized troop strength and was still scrambling to find the necessary equipment and supplies for many of the troops it had.

UN officials have been calling attention to structural weaknesses inherent in the way peacekeeping operations currently are planned, staffed and implemented. In his 3 April 2000 "Millennium Report" on the UN's future, Mr. Annan noted these were problems "only member states can fix." The peacekeeping system was often likened to a volunteer fire brigade, he commented, "but that description is too generous. Every time there is a fire, we must first find fire engines and the funds to run them before we can start dousing any flames. The present system relies almost entirely on last minute, ad-hoc arrangements." In early June, Mr. Annan reminded reporters that he had called for the rapid reinforcement of UNAMSIL, but "those governments with the capacity did not respond. The UN can be as effective and strong as the governments want it to be." Recommendations by an expert panel on UN peacekeeping operations is expected to be presented at the 6-8 September Millennium Assembly.

The record shows that Secretary-General Kofi Annan had repeatedly sought — but did not obtain — the resources the UN needed to carry out its mission in Sierra Leone.

"Peace on the cheap"

During the critical first 10 days of May, only the UK among the major powers responded to Mr. Annan's appeal for a "rapid reaction" force to reinforce hard-pressed UN units. The UK dispatched warships and a battalion of elite paratroops to secure Freetown and the strategic international airport. The UK action, taken to permit the evacuation of UK citizens from Sierra Leone, is widely credited with stabilizing the defence of Freetown and buying time for the deployment of more and better-equipped UNAMSIL contingents.

The world's leading military power, the US, also pledged support, offering to provide air transport for additional UNAMSIL contingents and "examine the possibilities" of providing needed military equipment. In the end, however, the US response was limited to flying in one load of ammunition to the Jordanian contingent. Washington offered to fly in a battalion of Bangladeshi reinforcements, but reportedly demanded $17-21 mn for the flights — far above the cost of commercial transport. The Canadian government, by contrast, flew in UNAMSIL reinforcements on military aircraft at no cost to the UN.

Mr. J. Stephen Morrison, Africa director of the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, told a reporter that the deaths of US peacekeepers in Somalia in 1993, and the absence of major US interests led the Clinton government to try to get "peace on the cheap" in Africa without becoming directly involved. Without strong US leadership, he asserted, "robust peace enforcement is beyond the capacity of the United Nations. The Security Council does not have the stomach for it."

Backing mandates with resources

On the night of 11 May the Security Council met in special session at the request of African countries to consider their proposal to upgrade the UNAMSIL mandate from peacekeeping under Chapter 6 of the UN charter, in which the UN intervenes at the request of warring parties, to peace enforcement under Chapter 7, in which the consent of one or more parties is absent and an active combat role is authorized. The council declined to give UNAMSIL an enforcement mandate but subsequently authorized an expansion of the military component to 13,000, with further increases likely.

Mr. Annan told the 11 May meeting that while he was not necessarily opposed to an enforcement mission in Sierra Leone, "the first priority of the council must be to ensure that we have the capacity to carry out the tasks that its mandate implies."

Algerian Ambassador Abdallah Baali, speaking on behalf of the Organization of African Unity, also noted the gap between mission requirements and resources. "This test of UNAMSIL shows very clearly that the mandate and resources available to it are not and never were adequate to the situation." While the Security Council routinely urged developing countries in Africa to take responsibility for African peacekeeping operations, Mr. Baali noted, West Africa had maintained a military presence in Sierra Leone "without the strong material support they were entitled to expect" from industrialized countries.

Bangladesh Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury addressed the reluctance of many developed countries to participate in peacekeeping operations. "The unfortunate reality," he said, "is that if developing countries stopped responding to the frantic calls of the UN today, there would be no peacekeeping tomorrow, barring a few of the choicest areas in the world which are of significant strategic interest to major powers. We should be grateful that developing countries continue to make contributions to UN peacekeeping," he continued. "Blaming failure on the peacekeeper is the easy way out of fulfilling our collective responsibility." ■

Saving a war's traumatized children

Sierra Leone camps try to rehabilitate child victims and soldiers

By **Margaret A. Novicki**
Freetown

Maimouna's face breaks into a smile as the visitor approaches. Her hair neatly coiffed in tiny braids, Maimouna is as lively as any child of three is apt to be — even with a stump that ends just above what would have been her right elbow. A year ago, Maimouna's mother, clutching her baby, attempted to escape an attack on their village by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). She was shot and the baby's right arm was hacked off by the rebels. Maimouna, left to die next to her mother's body, then was rescued by an uncle who fled with the child into the bush.

Today, Maimouna lives with her aunt at the Murraytown Amputee Camp, a squalid shantytown on the outskirts of Freetown, home to over 1,000 amputees, war-wounded and other victims of Sierra Leone's civil war. The camp is managed by Médécins sans Frontières with the help of Cause Canada and Handicap International. It provides social work services, vocational training, physical therapy, psychosocial counseling and prosthetic aids.

Margaret A. Novicki

UN Special Representative Olara Otunnu speaks with a former rebel combatant now learning weaving at a rehabilitation centre.

Maimouna and numerous children like her, as well as thousands of youth who were abducted by and conscripted into Sierra Leone's rebel armies over the past decade, have no knowledge or memory of what constitutes a normal childhood. They have spent their formative years as victims — and even perpetrators — of monstrous atrocities.

Margaret A. Novicki is United Nations Information Centre Director for Ghana and Sierra Leone.

ECOWAS message

Mr. Olara Otunnu, UN special representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict, and Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy paid a two-day visit to Freetown in late April to assess the condition of Sierra Leone's children. They carried a message from ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who had just concluded a conference in Ghana on West Africa's war-affected youth.

The message, delivered personally to President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council commander Johnny Paul Koroma and RUF leader Foday Sankoh, was that West African leaders would no longer tolerate the brutalization of children.

The Ghana conference called for the immediate release by armed groups of all children abducted and held against their will, and a "West African Week of Truce" to raise awareness. It urged the establishment within ECOWAS of an office on war-affected children and the early ratification by African governments of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child — raising the minimum age for participation in conflict to 18 — and the Statute of the International Criminal Court. The conference also decided that the protection and rights of children are to be explicitly incorporated into the mandates of ECOWAS peacekeeping missions, as well as into security training programmes.

The assumption of such responsibilities by West African leaders marked a "political turning point," said Mr. Otunnu. What was decided in Accra, added Mr. Axworthy, "has gone much further in terms of developing a specific concrete commitment to the rights of children than any other international organization has done up to now. It demonstrates that there is real leadership that African states are providing."

Former child soldiers

Such leadership is critical. Conservative estimates indicate that some 15,000 children have been exploited as child soldiers in the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This figure is only the tip of the iceberg, with thousands more affected by physical abuse, including rape and mutilation, and deprivations of all sorts. It is believed that 80 per cent of Sierra Leonean families have been dislocated at one time or another during the war.

The plight of the child combatants is especially poignant. Kidnapped at an age as early as five or six, forced to take hard drugs and taught only how to terrorize, these children bear deep psychological scars. Many have no recollection of who their families are or where they are from. But even when their origins are known, these child fighters bear such a stigma that their families and communities often do not want them back.

Daniel, age 15, now lives at St. Michael's Lodge, an interim child care centre 14 miles from Freetown. A former RUF fighter, he and the other 150 children at St. Michael's are learning vocational skills and receiving psychosocial counseling. Most of the children seem quite small for their ages: years of malnourishment have stunted their growth. When asked what he plans for his future, Daniel says he simply wants to go to school. Even these war-hardened youth are still children at heart. ■

New law to boost US-Africa trade

But impact on African exports will be limited

By **Jim Lobe**
Washington

Ending a tortuous, four-year journey through the US Congress, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act finally was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on 18 May. Mr. Clinton hailed the free trade legislation as one that will expand "Africa's access to our markets and improve the ability of African nations to ease poverty, increase growth, and heal the problems of [its] people." But some analysts suggested that its practical impact may be much more modest.

There is plenty of room for expansion. Sub-Saharan Africa last year accounted for barely 1 per cent of total US exports, imports, and foreign direct investment (FDI). Total two-way trade amounted to less than $20 bn, of which South Africa and petroleum exporters Nigeria, Angola and Gabon accounted for $15 bn. By itself, petroleum made up well over half of the $14 bn Africa exported to the US in 1999 (see graph). It also accounted for about two-thirds of the $9 bn of US investments in Africa the year before.

According to the bill's Congressional sponsors, the legislation is intended not just to increase the volume of US-Africa trade, but also to open US markets to a broader range of African exports — particularly in labour-intensive manufactured products like clothing, where economists have long argued that Africa enjoys a competitive advantage.

The legislation's key provisions include:

- Creation of a "US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum" to facilitate regular, high-level trade and investment policy discussions on the model of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.
- An eight-year extension for and expansion of African products eligible for treatment under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which provides duty-free access to the US market for qualifying developing countries.
- Removal of all existing quotas on textile and apparel products from Africa.
- Submission of a plan by the president for establishing free-trade agreements with African countries.
- Promotion of US private investment in Africa with $650 mn in loan guarantees and finance for US investors through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation

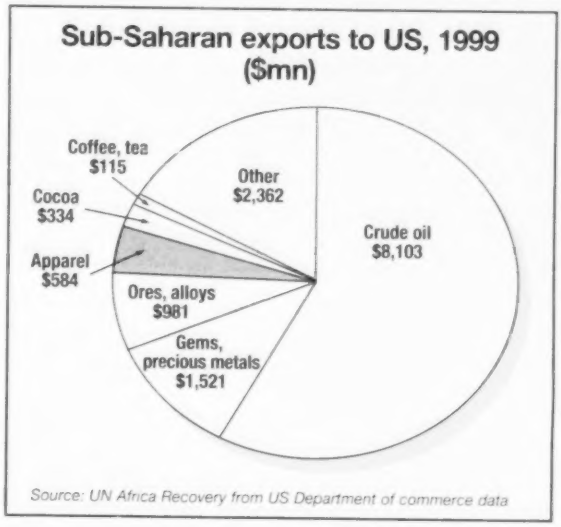
Textile compromise

The complex textile provisions could provide the most significant short-term benefits to Africa, say trade experts. Last year, total African apparel exports to the US came to about $580 mn, just 0.8 per cent of total US apparel imports. Under the new legislation, African manufacturers could almost double their exports next year and send as much as $4.2 bn of duty-free apparel made from African or third-country fabric to the US by 2008.

In the face of fierce opposition from domestic apparel manufacturers and the US trade union movement, Congressional negotiators arrived at a last-minute compromise that allows duty-free and quota-free market access for all apparel made in Africa from US-origin yarn and fabric. Apparel made in Africa from regional fabric can be exported duty free up to a cap of 1.5 per cent of total US imports in 2001, rising to 3.5 per cent of total apparel imports by 2008. In addition, apparel made from third-country fabric by any African country with a per capita annual income of less than $1,500, subject to the same caps, will be allowed entry duty free until 2004. The bill imposes stiffer penalties against the transshipment of apparel through Africa by non-African producers to the US.

These provisions will mainly benefit those countries whose apparel exports to the US have risen sharply in recent years, including South Africa, Mauritius, Lesotho, Kenya, Swaziland, Madagascar and Zimbabwe, according to a 1997 study by the US International Trade Commission. The same study concluded that Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania could benefit. Of these, only South Africa, Mauritius and Botswana have per capita incomes greater than $1,500.

"We're very pleased with this," said Mr. Peter Nyikuli, Kenya's commercial attache in Washington. "We lost 11,000 jobs in Kenya due to US quotas, which acted as a disincentive for would-be manufacturers to place investments and for would-be buyers to source from Kenya." The legislation enjoyed the strong support of the African diplomatic corps in Washington, which lobbied hard to secure its passage.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from US Department of commerce data

Limited benefits

Beyond the textile provisions, however, the impact of the legislation on the volume and content of US-Africa trade is likely to be limited. Although the legislation will raise the number of products eligible for duty-free access under the GSP from 4,000 to 5,800, the great majority of those items are either not currently produced in Africa or have only a limited potential US market.

Nor are all African countries eligible. A country may benefit only if the US president determines that it is committed to establishing a "market-based economy" that protects private and intellectual property rights, accords foreign investors the same treatment as its own nationals and eliminates corruption, bribery and barriers to US trade and investment, among other conditions. A country also may be deemed ineligible if it engages in gross human rights abuses or does not adequately protect core worker rights, including prohibitions on child labour.

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Schools struggling with crises

Financial constraints hamper expansion of primary education in Africa

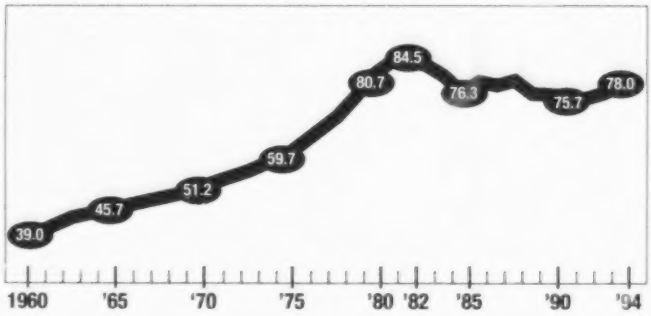
By **Ernest Harsch**
Dakar

There is a typical image of an African school: A solitary teacher stands before 70-80 students. Perhaps there is a blackboard and chalk. The students may have desks, maybe just benches or the floor to sit on. Some may go to a school that has a few books or exercise tablets. Some may have no classrooms, but must sit outside, under a tree. Two out of every five African children are far less lucky — there is no school at all.

By virtually any standard, education in sub-Saharan Africa lags far behind most other developing regions. One obvious reason is that the continent is the poorest. Without large and growing economies, governments have very limited tax bases to finance public school systems, while the bulk of African families cannot afford the high fees charged by private schools.

Another reason is that Africa began to develop modern schools — as distinct from traditional forms of education — much more recently, to a limited extent during the colonial era, but more seriously with the achievement of independence in the 1960s. At the start of that decade, sub-Saharan Africa's primary school gross enrolment ratio (all enrolled primary students, including those under- or over-aged, as a percentage of the primary school age-group) was just 39 per cent. That was far behind Asia's ratio of 67 per cent and Latin America's 73 per cent.

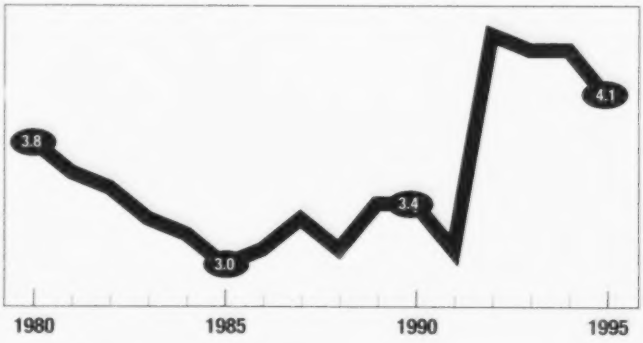
Primary education in sub-Saharan Africa
Gross enrolment ratio*



*All enrolled students as percentage of primary-school age group (i.e., including older students).

Source: UN Africa Recovery from World Bank, World Development Indicators 2000. CD-ROM version

Public education spending, sub-Saharan Africa
(as % of GNP)



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNESCO data

Progress and setbacks

The next two decades were periods of remarkable improvement, as many African governments energetically sought to promote industrial development and increase the skills and health of their people. By 1982, according to World Bank data, the gross enrolment ratio for primary education across sub-Saharan Africa had risen steadily to nearly 85 per cent (see graph). A number of countries — including Angola, Botswana, Cape Verde, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania — even were able to reach nearly universal primary education by the start of the 1980s.

The rest of that decade was one of sharp reverses, however. Much of Africa was hit by economic crisis, as rising oil import costs, high debt servicing burdens and stringent austerity measures cut deeply into government spending, including for education. As a share of gross national product (GNP), public expenditure on education in sub-Saharan Africa fell from 3.8 per cent in 1980 to 3.1 per cent in 1988 (see graph). But since African economies themselves were stagnating or shrinking, the decline in education's share translated into an even sharper drop in actual spending.

The structural adjustment programmes introduced in many African countries during the 1980s and early 1990s placed a particular constraint on educational financing, many development experts have argued. Promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), these programmes, especially in the early years, often obliged African governments to cut "non-essential" public expenditures any way they could. As a result, African education ministries found themselves without enough money to even maintain existing school systems, let alone expand them. Public sector hiring freezes made it difficult to recruit more teachers, while drastic declines in teachers' purchasing power led many to try to supplement their salaries with outside work, reducing the time they spent in classrooms.

As recently as a week before the opening of the World Education Forum in Dakar, one of Burkina Faso's teachers' unions went on strike over salary and benefits issues, as well as the "catastrophic situation" in the schools. A union declaration specifically attributed the problems to structural adjustment, which had

led to higher costs for students, cuts in scholarships, a tripling in the number of students per teacher, a decline in examination results, the "super-exploitation" of teachers and an overall erosion of educational quality.

Uphill recovery

With the Education for All conference in Jomtien in 1990, donors and national governments vowed to redouble their efforts to improve educational standards in developing countries. The Jomtien emphasis on basic education subsequently was incorporated into the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, which seeks to promote and coordinate all the UN's African development efforts.

African education ministries found themselves without enough money to even maintain existing school systems, let alone expand them. Public sector hiring freezes made it difficult to recruit more teachers.

Some African countries took steps to try to reverse the declines of the previous decade. Overall, public spending on education increased markedly. This was facilitated by a revival of economic growth in a number of countries, and by somewhat greater attention paid by economic policy officials to safeguarding education budgets.

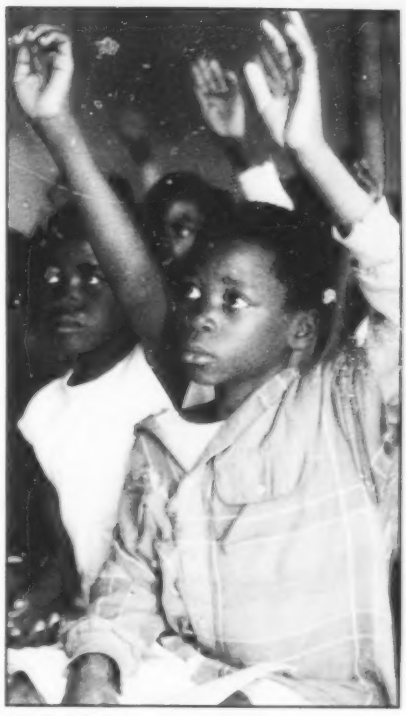
As a result, in sub-Saharan Africa the primary school net enrolment ratio (the proportion of eligible school-age children who are enrolled, excluding those who are under- or over-age) increased from 54 per cent in 1990 to 60 per cent in 1998. Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Swaziland, Togo and Uganda all registered notable improvements in primary school enrolments, some with striking advances in girls' enrolment.

In these respects, Malawi is one of Africa's qualified "success stories." In 1994, with the advent of a democratically elected government and the introduction of a policy of free primary education, the primary student population skyrocketed from 1.9 million to 3.2 million within just a year. By 1997, girls' participation had doubled, with their net enrolment ratio reaching 100 per cent, while the gross enrolment ratio (including under- and over-age girls) climbed to nearly 125 per cent.

Underpinning this rapid expansion, spending by the Malawian government on education increased, as did primary education's share of the total education budget (from 48 per cent to 60 per cent between 1990 and 1998). Donor agencies covered a hefty 46 per cent of total educational spending in 1997, but local communities also contributed significantly, mainly by providing labour and bricks for school construction.

Participants at the Dakar conference observed, however, that such campaigns to increase primary school enrolment rates in Africa, as in other regions, often have come at the expense of quality and to the neglect of other educational sectors.

In Malawi, for example, the proportion of students remaining in school until grade 5 fell by more than half between 1994 and 1997, reaching a level even below the start of the decade. More than 36,000 new teachers were hired to accommodate the expanded student population, but 20,000 of them were untrained, while the higher salary outlay for teachers often meant that books, chalk and other supplies could not be purchased. Enrolment in Malawi's adult literacy programme fell by more than half between 1990 and 1998, while the overall literacy rate declined from 50 per cent to 42 per cent, with women's literacy dropping even more sharply, from 44 per cent to 33 per cent.



UNICEF / Giacomo Pirozzi

War, AIDS and adjustment

Many other African countries registered no real improvement in enrolment rates or other basic quantitative indicators. Some saw further decline. Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and a number of other countries ravaged by war have experienced the wholesale destruction of schools and the uprooting of millions of people, among them school-age children. Instead of finding a place in a classroom, some of these children were in fact conscripted to fight.

Elsewhere, high debt-servicing costs prevented many governments from increasing their education budgets. The HIV/AIDS pandemic left behind many orphans without parents to pay their school fees, while in some severely stricken countries the number of teachers dying of the disease is higher than the new graduates produced by teacher-training colleges. Swaziland had a large drop in its net enrolment rate between 1993 and 1996, in part because three or four teachers were dying of AIDS each week in that small country.

While structural adjustment programmes now formally accord a higher priority to education, in practice that may not bring real improvement. A report issued shortly before the Dakar conference by Oxfam International, a non-governmental organization that works extensively in Africa, pointed out that the macroeconomic and fiscal targets in such programmes still often contradict or undercut efforts to boost public service delivery.

In Zambia, the report notes, a "radical" adjustment programme introduced in 1991 contributed to a 25 per cent decline in actual education spending over just three years. As a percentage of gross domestic product, average expenditure on education in 1992-96 was half the level of the mid-1980s. By 1994, primary school enrolment was declining, especially of girls. "Compared with the [IMF] inflation targets drawn up in Washington," observed Oxfam, "the education targets set at Jomtien have been irrelevant. In fact, the design and implementation of structural adjustment in Zambia has destroyed any prospect of the country achieving the Jomtien goals." ■

Dakar forum promotes basic education

from page 1

basic education for all. In a number of countries, war, political instability and cultural attitudes clearly were obstacles to improving school enrolment rates.

Overall, however, insufficient funding was identified as one of the most prevalent obstacles. This was despite Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's cautionary comment that "universal education is not a function of the amount of money, but above all of political will, the will to frontally attack and eradicate this handicap and injustice [of poor education] by involving all sectors of the population."

Delegates nevertheless concurred that significantly greater financial resources are needed, although there was some controversy over the best ways to address education's financial difficulties. How should national governments balance the need to vastly expand access to education with other urgent priorities? To what extent could — or should — local communities help shoulder some of the financial burden? How can donor assistance be directed and utilized more effectively?

The conference did not clearly resolve such dilemmas. In the view of some participants, especially those from NGOs, The language in the Dakar Framework "is vague and lacks detail," especially on financing issues, declared Mr. Thomas Bediako, chief coordinator of Education International in Ghana, representing NGOs as a whole. The NGOs, he said, had hoped for a clear commitment by governments to spend on education the equivalent of 6 per cent of gross national product and for donors to target 8 per cent of their aid to education, or four times what they currently allocate.

Some participants worried that the emphasis on quantitative targets, especially primary school enrolment rates, has tended to divert attention from educational quality. Where many more children now are enrolled, adequate facilities and teaching materials are not yet available, while teachers remain poorly paid and too few new ones have been hired. Some African countries, such as

Education for an 'African renaissance'

"We are more convinced than ever," African education ministers declared, "that education is the sine quo non for empowering the people of Africa to participate in and benefit more effectively from the opportunities available in the globalized economy of the 21st century." At one of six meetings held in different regions of the world to prepare for the education forum in Dakar, African ministers of education gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa, 6-10 December 1999 to assess the continent's specific challenges and priorities. They adopted a framework for action, "Education for African Renaissance in the 21st Century," to complement the global framework adopted in Dakar.

The ministers noted that although primary enrolment has increased considerably in many African countries over the past decade, it still remains low compared to most other regions. The reasons are multiple. "Many countries," the ministers observed, "have experienced austere economic adjustment programmes, an increased debt burden, a skewed global economic system, poor governance, inadequate and sometimes poorly used resources, as well as drought and floods. These factors, combined with the impact of HIV/AIDS and armed conflict, have continued to have devastating effects on education in Africa."

The number of students dropping out of school has increased, largely due to high costs and armed conflicts, the ministers reported. The quality of education generally is poor, and educational content is "often irrelevant to the needs of the learners and of social, cultural and economic development."

Yet the ministers remained optimistic that Africa's educational systems can be significantly improved, given "the recent political progress and increased investment in education in parts of Africa and the opportunities offered by new information and communications technologies." They called for combining African knowledge and values of solidarity with modern management techniques, social and physical sciences, and new technologies to solve Africa's chronic problems.

Toward that end, they urged concerted action in priority areas, anticipating the targets later incorporated into the global Dakar Framework. In addition, the ministers stressed developing non-formal strategies for reaching disadvantaged children, including street and working children and refugees; making curricula more relevant to local cultures; promoting use of the mother tongue in the early years of primary education and in adult education; integrating education into the family, community and workplace; and involving teachers and their unions in the development of the teaching profession.

Besides using existing budgetary resources more efficiently, African governments should increase their educational outlays to at least 7 per cent of gross domestic product within 5 years and 9 per cent within 10 years. While governments have the principal financial responsibility, they must act in broad partnership with communities, parents and teachers' associations, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies, the private sector and families. Such partnerships should involve "not simply cost-sharing, but the whole education process, including decision-making, management and teaching."

Meanwhile, external creditor institutions should ensure that the savings from debt reduction are invested in education and other social sectors, the ministers declared. Both multilateral and bilateral donor institutions should work with African governments and other partners "to assess the side-effects of SAPs [structural adjustment programmes], and other development programmes, on education." They also should increase financial and technical support to education in Africa to "at least double the current level by 2015."

Uganda, already are confronting some of the challenges raised by massive primary school expansion (see page 20). These include the need to strengthen secondary schooling as well, both to handle more primary graduates and to train the teachers needed in the primary schools, a topic that was addressed in Dakar only at a small session between the main plenaries.

Although adult literacy is formally defined as a component of basic education, in practice it has been a "neglected dimension" of the Education for All campaign, in the words of a 1997 UNESCO assessment of adult education worldwide. Despite this, sub-Saharan Africa has continued to make progress in reducing illiteracy rates over the past decade (see graph, page 18).

Schoolchildren greet UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Senegal, at start of tour that also included the Central African Republic, Gabon, Gambia and Cameroon.

Higher education was scarcely mentioned at the Dakar forum — except by a few donor representatives who complained about its high costs. Yet as Acting Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities D. Nmah Tarpeh later told *Africa Recovery*, Africa's long-term development depends on advancing the entire spectrum of education, from primary schools through to universities (see page 22). The continent, he said, requires "highly-trained minds that can look at problems critically. Higher education makes a difference in the direction of a country."

Focus on girls

Beginning from a very low base, the rate of girls' enrolment in sub-Saharan primary schools has more than doubled since 1960, to just over 70 per cent in 1994 (see graph, below). But girls in the region remain far more likely than boys to never attend school or to drop out early. They comprise 58 per cent of children not in primary school.

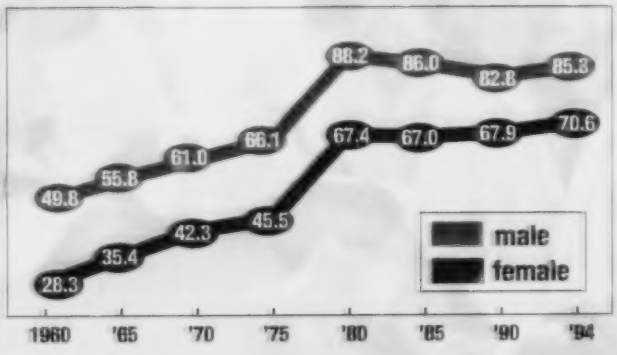
The Jomtien conference helped initiate a strong push for girls' education. Gender disparities have been narrowed almost everywhere, even in South Asia and the Arab states, where they remain the greatest. But in sub-Saharan Africa, the gap actually has widened slightly. In 1990, according to UNESCO figures, 50 per cent of primary school age girls were in school, compared to 59 per cent of boys, a gap of 9 percentage points. By 1998, the rate for girls had climbed to 54 per cent, but boys achieved a bigger increase, to 66 per cent, a difference of 12 points.

Reversing this trend is vital for Africa's development, Mr. Annan emphasized, noting that girls' education is "a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return," since better educated girls and women contribute enormously to society's nutrition, health, development and peace. Explaining the UN's new initiative, he vowed that within a year the UN would help each of the main countries affected to develop a plan of action to promote gender equality in education. But in this endeavour, he added, "political will must be underpinned by resources," pledging that the UN also would assist countries to free up funds for girls' education through better use of development assistance and debt relief.

Girls are kept out of school by numerous economic, social and cultural constraints, a special panel on girls' education observed. In Burkina Faso, noted a participant, a 7-year-old girl must do 3.5 more hours of domestic work daily, compared with boys, and therefore has to work harder to stay in school if she is lucky enough to go. Poor parents often cannot afford school fees for both their girls and boys and thus tend to keep the girls at home.

Therefore, argued Ms. Vida Yeboah from Ghana, a leader of the continent-wide Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), parents should be shown how their girls' education can improve income prospects. Ms. Abibatou Ndiaye, president of the Federation of

Gender gap in primary education, sub-Saharan Africa (gross enrolment ratios)



Source: UN Africa Recovery from World Bank, World Development Indicators 2000, CD-ROM version

Women's Associations of Senegal, stressed that mothers need to become more active within parents' associations.

Often, girls who go to school confront an "unsafe environment," including sexual harassment from male teachers and students, so steps need to be taken to increase girls' security, emphasized Ms. Aïcha Dah Diallo, a former education minister in Guinea and now UNESCO's director for basic education. Ms. Satang Jobarleh, representing the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Gambia, added that the "taboo" on discussions of rape and other violence against women must be broken. This point was picked up in the plenary address of UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Carol Bellamy, who noted that too often school environments "are unhealthy, unsafe, ineffective and unfriendly to girls."

Debt relief "allowed us to free up additional resources to finance public expenditures for sectors, including education, that are essential for reducing absolute poverty."

— Alcido N'guenha, Education Minister, Mozambique

Donors' qualified commitments

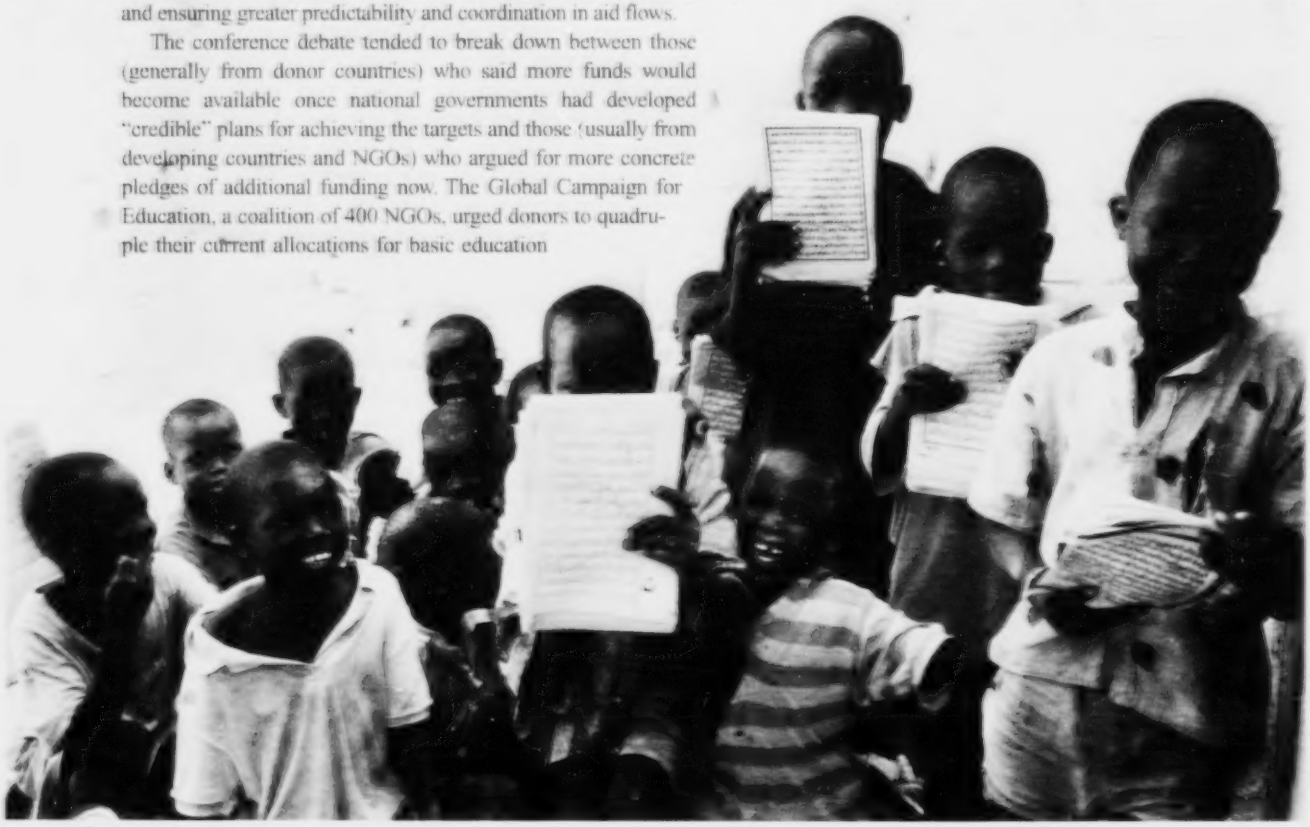
In aiming for the basic education targets, declared the Dakar Framework, "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources." But donor countries, as a group, made no specific pledges of how much they would contribute. They did agree to "consider" several options, including increasing external financing and ensuring greater predictability and coordination in aid flows.

The conference debate tended to break down between those (generally from donor countries) who said more funds would become available once national governments had developed "credible" plans for achieving the targets and those (usually from developing countries and NGOs) who argued for more concrete pledges of additional funding now. The Global Campaign for Education, a coalition of 400 NGOs, urged donors to quadruple their current allocations for basic education to about $4 bn annually, or half the estimated $8 bn per year required over the next decade to achieve the goal of universal primary education.

Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the UN Development Programme, said that he had some sympathy for both points of view. "Resources alone do not change educational performance," he said. "It must be resources behind sound national strategies. While it is not reasonable to pledge $8 bn of additional resources today, as national action plans are developed, as needs are identified, it is critical that there are plausible and early commitments by donors to meet this global target of universal education. Jomtien's disappointment was not lack of national action plans alone. It was lack of additional international resources for education."

Some donor representatives did make commitments. Mr. Gene Sperling, economic policy assistant to US President Bill Clinton, pledged that the US would increase its bilateral assistance for basic education internationally by 50 per cent. World Bank President James Wolfensohn noted that his organization had doubled its lending for education since 1990 to about $1.9 bn a year, and had increased the percentage devoted to basic education from 27 to 44 per cent. The World Bank and other donors, he said, "must be ready to respond more quickly and help countries when they are ready to move."

Beyond increasing the amount of aid, donors also must simplify their often complicated procedures, coordinate more closely



UNICEF / S. Kohara

with other donors, and ensure that aid flows become more predictable, added Ms. Eveline Herfkens, development cooperation minister of the Netherlands. "We donors have to clean up our act," she acknowledged.

In the discussions on the Dakar Framework, representatives from Ghana and other developing countries raised concerns about the absence of any mechanism to monitor donors' performance, at the same time that aid recipients are expected to scrupulously fulfill a wide range of very specific conditions.

Donors also differed among themselves. Some tended to focus exclusively on education. Some emphasized education's place within a broader spectrum of development priorities. While the World Bank and others addressed the need to expand primary education in conjunction with other educational subsectors (secondary and tertiary, adult literacy, vocational training), a few donors tended to draw sharp distinctions.

Too much spending still goes to higher education, claimed Ms. Clare Short, the UK's secretary of state for international cooperation. Such spending, she maintained, often ends up "educating the sons and daughters of the elite at the expense of the poorest.... Development assistance should be for the poor. This needs to change." Several developing country representatives disputed her emphasis. After some debate, the wording of the Dakar Framework's reference to donor assistance was altered to reflect a more inclusive approach: instead of suggesting that donors consider "increasing external finance for basic education," as originally drafted, the final text now recommends "increasing external finance for education, in particular basic education."

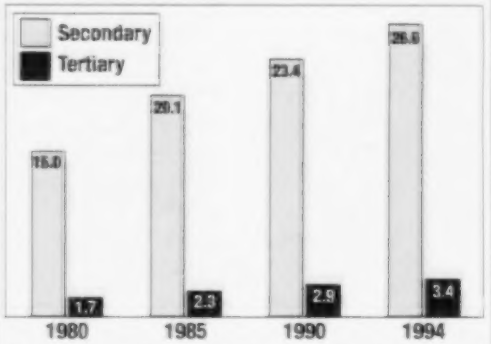
Partnership for African universities

Four private US donor institutions have pledged a total of $100 mn over the next five years to strengthen the work of universities in Africa. Africans determined to tackle the daunting challenges facing the continent "recognize that their societies need a new generation of well-educated leaders trained in many fields," declared President Vartan Gregorian of the Carnegie Corporation at the launch of the "Partnership to Strengthen African Universities" in New York on 24 April.

The Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller, Ford and MacArthur foundations will decide individually how to allocate the resources, with each initially focusing on countries and universities where they already are involved. In the case of Carnegie, Mr. Gregorian specified, this would include Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, with particular attention to the physical and social sciences. The foundations will select universities that encourage innovation, especially through the use of new technologies, in countries that have undergone systematic political reform. In addition, they have pledged to help establish regional and inter-country education leadership links.

Noting at the partnership launch that the World Education Forum would open in Dakar, Senegal, just two days later, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized, "Universities provide the logical extension to basic education for all. The university is equally a development tool for Africa.... It holds the key to something we all want and need: African answers to African problems; the capacity to address the most pressing issues both at the theoretical and practical levels."

Secondary and tertiary enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa (%)



Source: UN Africa Recovery from World Bank, World Development Indicators 2000, CD-ROM version

Debt relief dividends

The Framework's reference to debt also was modified at the urging of developing country ministers, who wanted stronger language. While the draft included a call for "providing earlier, deeper and broader debt relief," the final text added the words "and/or debt cancellation." The savings that governments realize from such debt relief or cancellation are to be used for poverty reduction, the Framework states, "with a strong commitment to basic education."

Some countries already have begun to reap the benefits of debt reduction. Mozambican Education Minister Alcido N'guenha noted that his country — one of the first beneficiaries of the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative — was able to increase education's share of the budget to 19 per cent in 1999, from a low of around 11 per cent in the early 1990s, following years of civil war and structural adjustment. "The alleviation of external debt servicing resulting from the HIPC initiative," he told a roundtable on debt and education, "allowed us to free up additional resources to finance public expenditures for sectors, including education, that are essential for reducing absolute poverty."

HIPC also could significantly benefit education in a number of other African countries, including Mauritania, Tanzania and Uganda, noted Mr. Birger Fredriksen, the World Bank's director for human development in Africa. Beyond the actual funds freed up, he added, by directly linking debt relief with social sector spending goals, the HIPC process has helped win education ministers a "seat at the table" alongside finance ministers and other key policy makers.

Involving all stakeholders

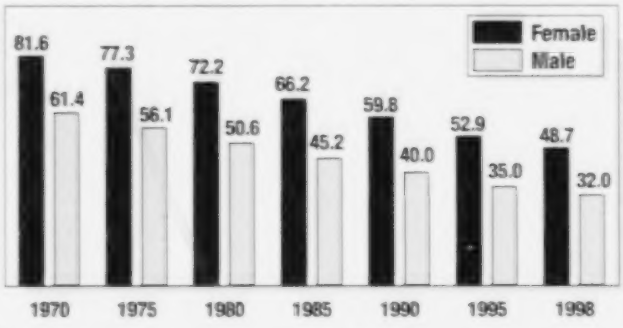
While external support will be important for achieving basic education for all, African participants repeatedly emphasized that their own countries must bear the prime responsibility. "It's not enough to blame others for what they have failed to do," declared Ms. Graça Machel, a former education minister of Mozambique and one of the organizers of the Jomtien conference. "We have to make the effort to show our own commitments."

Those commitments do not rest with governments alone,

pointed out Nigerian President Obasanjo. "The people must be totally involved," he said. The concept of bringing all sectors into the campaign for basic education — parents, teachers, local communities, NGOs, churches, businesses — was a key feature of the strategy initiated in Jomtien and reiterated in Dakar.

The nature of such participation has been a subject of considerable debate, however. Parents associations, teachers' unions and other local organizations have been pressing for greater decision-making input over the hiring of teachers, the siting of schools, the quality of education, and other matters. But for many cash-strapped governments and their external partners, the tendency often has been to view community involvement primarily in financial terms, as a form of "cost-sharing."

Illiteracy in sub-Saharan Africa (% of people aged 15 and above)



Source: UN Africa Recovery from World Bank, World Development Indicators 2000, CD-ROM version

Community initiatives

Confronted with the deterioration or absence of public education, communities across Africa already are becoming increasingly active in raising supplementary funds for their children's schooling. In Nigeria and Kenya, community fundraising socials are common. In Botswana, local councils impose school levies. In Madagascar, farmers pay teachers with bags of rice. In Mali, villagers and external NGOs are financing a parallel system of "community schools," which provide education of a quality comparable to those of the government schools.

While perhaps necessary under current circumstances, reliance on school fees and other forms of community funding is not desirable, many participants in the Dakar forum believed. If access to primary education comes to depend on the ability of a family or community to pay, then only the better-off can get quality educations while the poorest will be left even further behind. In Kenya, Zimbabwe and other African countries where school fees and other costs are common, there are big differences in educational access along social, regional and ethnic lines.

For reasons of equity, and to ensure that basic education really does become available to all, UNICEF and such NGOs as Oxfam International have long been opposed to the introduction of primary school fees. Although the Jomtien declaration made no reference to "free" primary schooling, the Dakar Framework does, emphasizing that by 2015 all children should be able to complete "free and compulsory primary education of good quality." ■

Senegal to recruit more teachers

Long before he was elected president of Senegal in March, Mr. Abdoulaye Wade was a teacher. "I was responsible for 85 children in my class," he recalled in his welcoming address to the Dakar conference. The average ratio of students to teachers has since come down to around 50, but primary classes still are overcrowded and conditions for Senegalese teachers remain poor.

Although Senegal was proud to host the World Education Forum, it is in no position to boast about its educational indicators. In 1998 Senegal's primary gross enrolment ratio was 65.5 per cent, up from 56.8 per cent in 1990, but still below the sub-Saharan average. One constraint has been the difficulty of recruiting enough teachers. Senegal signed its first structural adjustment programme in 1979 — one of the earliest in Africa — stipulating tight controls over the hiring of new public sector personnel, including teachers. Meanwhile, the real salaries of practicing teachers have stagnated, contributing to demoralization.

As a partial response, the previous government of President Abdou Diouf began recruiting 1,200 volunteer teachers a year in 1995, promising that after five years they would be hired on a contractual basis. The volunteer scheme made it possible to increase enrolment rates somewhat, but it has been controversial with the teachers' unions, which see it as an attempt to erode the employment status of regular teachers.

As the presidential election campaign unfolded, the teachers' discontent was compounded by that of volunteers who had not yet received contracts. In addition, teacher training college graduates who had not found teaching positions staged raucous street demonstrations. Among his numerous campaign pledges, Mr. Wade promised to overhaul Senegal's education system and recruit more teachers. Once elected — the first time in Senegal that an opposition leader has secured the presidency — he renewed his pledge to place the teacher training graduates and hire more teachers generally. But public pressure remains. During the World Education Forum, Senegalese volunteer and contractual teachers demonstrated outside the conference site to highlight their demands for regular teaching status.

Equal enrolment is just a start

Tanzanian girls handicapped by domestic workloads, social constraints

By **Lucas Liganga**
Dar es Salaam

Tanzania has been more successful than many other developing countries in achieving gender equality in education, with girls making up 49.6 per cent of all enrolled primary students in 1997. Overall enrolment rates are low, however — with only 56.7 per cent of primary-school-age children actually in school in 1998 — while drop-out rates are high. As a result, more than a million girls still are not in school.

Yet even those who attend school face a variety of discriminatory practices that curtail learning. Girls attend school on a less regular basis than boys due to heavy household workloads, traditional practices biased against girls' education, and environments in schools that are unfriendly to girls' participation, says a study by Kuleana, a children's rights centre based in Mwanza Region.

Girls' school performance is consistently lower than that of their male peers at both primary and secondary levels, especially in subjects such as science and mathematics. The performance gap is particularly pronounced in rural districts, where more than twice as many boys than girls achieve examination scores of 50 per cent or more, probably reflecting additional pressures of agricultural labour on rural girls' time compared with their urban counterparts.

Many girls who complete primary school still are unable to read and write. According to a study by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), 33-57 per cent of girls completing standard seven in Tunduru District, in southern Tanzania, were illiterate in 1992-94.

The lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities in schools often affects girls more than boys. Unhygenic conditions and the lack of toilet doors cause many older girls to stay home several days each month during their menstrual period, notes the Kuleana study.

Children also must often perform labour for teachers, with girls typically asked to do domestic chores such as fetching water and firewood, sweeping, cooking and washing dishes, while boys do weeding and building work. "Even during their leisure time," reports UNICEF, "girls will be called to make tea, fetch water for the teachers and clean their offices. Sometimes they are sent to the market or into the garden to look for vegetables."

Outside school, girls have less time for homework because of the many chores they must perform at home or as domestic servants elsewhere, including food preparation, cleaning, washing, looking after siblings and fetching water. "We girls don't have time to play around with such things [homework], because we have a lot of work waiting for us at home," says Consolata Chitanda, a standard six girl.

Additionally, early marriage tends to cut short girls' education at the upper primary and secondary levels. In some areas, the prospect of receiving a bride price leads parents to remove their daughters from school early. In Kajiado, in the Maasai heartland, it was recently reported that 13 girls had refused to go home during school holidays out of fear of being married off by their parents. ■

Women's literacy: a tool for leadership

Among several female teachers and learners who recounted their personal experiences in a "voices from the grassroots" segment of the World Education Forum's final plenary session, two were from the African continent:

Laila Zaghoul, 18 years old, lives in Mokattan, a neighbourhood of Cairo, where one-third of the refuse workers in the Egyptian capital reside. Because of her family's poverty, she could not attend primary school. But at the age of 13 she was able to enroll in a vocational training programme, where she learned to read and write. "I became increasingly aware of the needs of the area where I lived, in terms of funding, health care, living conditions," she said. Over time, she trained 22 other young women, and the group became active in an array of community initiatives: annual child vaccination drives, literacy campaigns, child care, the delivery of health services, and fighting for individuals' rights. "We organized local elections, so the people could have a genuine choice when it came to choosing their representatives." Ms. Zaghoul's team is helping young women in other Cairo neighbourhoods form similar groups.

Dibou Faye, now 15, is from a village in Senegal's Diourbel region. "No one ever allowed me to go to school," she said, and at the age of 7 she began working by caring for other children. By the age of 12 she was a domestic worker in Dakar, preparing food, doing laundry, and scrubbing floors. She joined the African Children and Young Workers' Movement, a non-governmental association, which works with local communities. The movement organized literacy classes, so Ms. Faye was able, for the first time, to learn French and become literate. She and about 100 other young Senegalese eventually produced a book, *The Children of Africa*, to publicize children's rights. Those who could write contributed a written page each; those who could not, drew pictures. In addition to health care, shelter, and better conditions overall, she said, "We have a right to read and write."

Uganda tackling school bottlenecks

After rapid primary growth, focus shifts to quality and to secondary education

By **Fred Kirungi**
Kampala

Uganda's tremendous success in expanding primary education — with a tripling in the number of primary students since President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 — is highlighting a new set of problems. How can educational standards be improved? What will happen to all these pupils when they complete primary school? The first problem already is preoccupying government planners. The second, acknowledges Commissioner for Secondary Education Yusuf K. Nsubuga, is a challenge that soon will face the second tier of Uganda's education system.

That the questions now arise at all is a sign of how far Uganda has come. "Everything had virtually collapsed under [former president] Idi Amin and because of the 1979 war" with Tanzania, recalls Acting Commissioner for Education Sam Onek. "So in the early 1980s, emphasis was placed on the rehabilitation and expansion of schools without, however, proper planning." Between 1980 and 1985, education accounted for an average of only 15.6 per cent of recurrent government expenditure, reflecting its continued low priority under the government of Mr. Milton Obote.

UNICEF / Giacomo Pirozzi

Ugandan primary students: Will there be enough secondary school places for all successful pupils?

That, however, began to change after President Museveni took power. Education's share of recurrent spending rose somewhat to 17.8 per cent between 1986 and 1990, and over the subsequent decade increased much more significantly, to 30 per cent.

In 1989, a commission appointed by the government to review the entire education system recommended making primary education free and compulsory, among other proposals. The government accepted the recommendations in 1992. Five years later, in 1997, it declared a policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE), which entitles up to four children per family to receive free education in government and government-aided primary schools.

Enrolments skyrocket

Between 1986 and 1996, primary school enrolment rose modestly, from 2.2 million to 3.1 million. But with the introduction of UPE in 1997, it jumped to 5.3 million, an increase of 70 per cent in just one year. By 1999, the number had risen to 6.6 million, and the Ministry of Education expects it to reach 6.8 million by 2003.

The enrolments under UPE exceeded even the most optimistic projections. The gross enrolment ratio (the total population in school as a percentage of the population of 6-12 years), which stood at 69 per cent in 1990 and 80 per cent in 1996, jumped to 124 per cent in 1997. "Many parents who had more than four children simply allocated them to relatives or pleaded with the local [programme] implementors to register them. Even men and women who were above primary school-going age enrolled for UPE," explains Mr. Onek.

Stretched to the limit

One result was that available facilities were stretched to the limit. The average number of pupils per school jumped from 363 to 616 between 1996 and 1997. Although the number of teachers rose from 81,564 to 89,247, it did not keep pace with the rapid increase in pupils, so that the pupil-to-teacher ratio jumped from 38:1 to 60:1. The picture was even worse in the two lowest primary classes, where the ratio of students to teachers exceeded 100.

The reality of a teacher trying to teach a class of over 100 pupils under a mango tree is all too common, and has raised concerns about academic standards. Although no research has been done to assess the impact of UPE on the quality of education, many observers are convinced that standards have dropped. The Kitante Primary School in Kampala "used to be among the 10 best schools in the country," says Ms. Jane Nakityo, who has a son in the school. "Today, it is not even among the top 50. There are just too many pupils for the teachers to pay attention to each of them."

The Ministry of Education and Sports stopped ranking schools' performance in national examinations in 1997, but independent rankings by the media show a predominance of private

schools among those judged high in academic excellence. In the 1999 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) for example, the best five schools were all private, according to a list compiled in February by *The Monitor* newspaper. Because of concerns over standards, many well-to-do parents have moved their children to private schools.

Mr. Onek, however, does not believe that there has been such a drastic decline in standards. The introduction of UPE, he points out, mostly affected the lower grades. Until those pupils finish all seven years of primary school, "we shall not have a complete picture of the impact of UPE on the quality of education."

Nevertheless, the government is not sitting back. It is taking measures to ensure that standards are progressively improved. In the short term, the government is aiming to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio in the first two grades to 80:1, and in the remaining grades to an average of 50:1. Some of the money saved through debt forgiveness under the heavily indebted poor countries initiative of the IMF and World Bank will be spent on recruiting more teachers. In addition, between the 2000/01 and 2002/03 academic years, a further 13,000 classrooms are to be built, at a cost of $180 mn.

On to secondary education

The problem of the transition from primary to secondary school already is being posed, even before the first intake of UPE pupils completes the seventh level. The transition rates are very low. Out of the 211,749 candidates who sat for the PLE in 1997, for example, only 87,231 or 41.3 per cent went on to a secondary school the following year, even though 70 per cent passed.

"Failure to absorb the growing number of primary school leavers will undermine Universal Primary Education and broader national goals like the elimination of poverty," says Mr. Nsubuga.

Fortunately, the government still has some time, as the number of those completing primary school will not rise dramatically until 2003. But then the number of PLE candidates will jump to about 800,000, compared to 300,000 who sat for the exam in 1998.

To prepare for such challenges, the Ministry of Education and Sports is finalizing a "strategic plan" for secondary education. Under the plan, enrolment in the first four years of secondary school should rise from 149,840 in 1999 to 262,074 students by 2003. "This will be done through building more schools, rehabilitating and expanding existing schools and utilizing the available schools more efficiently," says Mr. Nsubuga.

Currently there are about 1,200 secondary schools, of which 621 are government-aided and the rest private. Investment in private secondary schools is being encouraged through provision of technical support, guidance and financial incentives such as loans, grants and tax holidays.

The problem, however, is not just the limited number of schools but also access to secondary education by various sections of society. People living in and around Kampala, the capital, and other urban centres have much easier access to secondary education than those in the countryside. Only 6 per cent of children of the poorest 25 per cent of families complete secondary education, compared with 22 per cent from the richest 25 per cent.

The government is seeking to address such geographical and social imbalances. "We are aiming to have at least one government-aided secondary school in each sub-county," says Mr. Nsubuga. Out of about 900 sub-counties, 428 currently are without government-aided schools. Of Uganda's 45 districts, 15 have been identified as the most "educationally disadvantaged," accounting for less than a fifth of gross national enrolment. They will receive special attention, with a greater share of educational resources channeled to them and private funders given more incentives to invest.

"Failure to absorb the growing number of primary school leavers will undermine Universal Primary Education and broader national goals like the elimination of poverty."

— Yusuf K. Nsubuga, Commissioner for Secondary Education

In 1994, a government committee found that secondary school fees were escalating due to the growing cost of education, and that most parents were too poor to afford them. The committee recommended a new fee structure that would impose a ceiling on school charges, with the government contributing between one-third and one-half of student costs. Any school wanting to charge more than the recommended maximum would first have to get the backing of the parents and the permission of the ministry.

The burden on parents — who in the past have heavily supported teachers' salaries — also will be reduced by improving government pay for teachers.

Improving female access

Girls' access to education, not only at secondary school level but throughout the education system, is also receiving government attention. Despite the introduction of UPE, "the percentage of females enrolled in primary schools is still lower than that of boys," Vice-President Specioza Wandira Kazibwe noted in June 2000, at the launching of the National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda.

Females account for 47 per cent of total enrolment in primary school, 32 per cent at the secondary level, 35 per cent in the universities and 13 per cent in the polytechnics. In some rural districts, such as Kitgum and Kotido, girls account for only 35 per cent of total primary school enrolment. Partly, this is because girls drop out at a much higher rate than boys. While the gender gap in enrolment between boys and girls is only 1.1 per cent in the first grade, by the seventh it reaches 15.7 per cent.

Many schools are designing programmes not only to attract girls, but to also keep them until they complete their studies. At Taibah Primary and Secondary School, "We have a personal development curriculum which teaches self-awareness and communication skills and covers matters of sex, AIDS, infatuation and use of contraceptives," says Education Director Mariam Luyombo. "As a result, we hardly have any girl who doesn't complete school." ■

Ghana grapples with university fees

National debate is launched over "cost-sharing" dilemmas

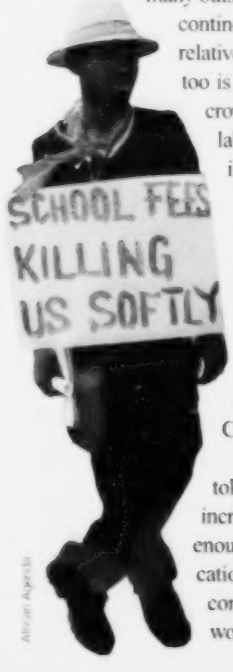
By **Ernest Harsch**
Accra

At a campus that has known many demonstrations over the years, several hundred university and secondary students packed a lecture hall at the University of Ghana on 2 May, clenched fists pumping in the air. Instead of the customary anti-government slogans, the student leaders called out, "Support the fund!" The crowd repeatedly responded with a chorus of, "Invest in education!" They then set off on a march and motorcade through the streets of the capital to solicit broader public backing for the Ghana Education Trust Fund.

The fund, currently under consideration by Parliament, is one innovative response to the financial strains afflicting Ghana's schools, from the primary level up through the universities. It has become patently clear to many Ghanaians that the government, despite significant budgetary allocations, simply cannot keep up with the rising costs of education or the growing public demand for more schools, of better quality.

How to pay for education has been a politically sensitive issue in Ghana, especially at the universities, where students are well-organized and are accustomed to free tuition. In late 1999 students briefly went on strike to protest rising "user fees," the charges that university administrations levy on students for accommodations, meals and use of laboratories and libraries.

The University of Ghana, Legon, just on the edge of Accra, is the country's pride. Founded a half-century ago, it has produced many outstanding scholars and leaders, some known across the continent and internationally. But while Legon remains in relatively better condition than many campuses in Africa, it too is feeling the strains: classrooms and dorms are overcrowded, the libraries have few new books or journals, laboratories lack essential equipment, and the faculty is poorly paid.



African Agenda

The government faces difficult choices. Since 1992, the constitution mandates free and compulsory basic education for all. With about 30 per cent of Ghanaian children still unable to attend primary school, this means that more of the education budget must shift to lower-level schools. As a result, "there is not much left to go around," notes Deputy Minister of Education Mohamed Ibn Chambass, who is responsible for higher education.

"The moral issue is very sharp," Mr. Chambass told *Africa Recovery*. "Do you spend more money to increase the education of those who are privileged enough to have primary, secondary, and now tertiary education? Or do you limit funding at the tertiary level and concentrate on getting the 30 per cent enrolled, who would otherwise be condemned to illiteracy?" At the same time, he added, "we know that higher education has such a great impact on the process of growth and development, that we should not minimize its importance."

Higher education is essential if Ghana and other African countries are ever to solve their problems of food security, health, good governance and other developmental priorities, adds Mr. George Benneh, a former vice-chancellor of the University of Ghana and currently chairman of the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). "Unless we have well-trained, skilled people from our universities and science and technology institutes, Africa will continue to depend on outsiders," he says.

Universities under strain

According to NCTE enrolment figures, the universities' financial constraints have been compounded by a sharp rise in the number of students over the past decade, a veritable "massification of student intake," as Mr. Benneh calls it. This increase reflects in part the growing population of secondary-school graduates, many of whom would like to go on to the tertiary level.

In the 1990/91 academic year, Ghana's three existing universities (University of Ghana, University of Science and Technology in Kumasi and University of Cape Coast) had a total student enrolment of 9,997. By 1998/99, their combined student population had rocketed up to 26,394. In addition, the new University College of Education in Winneba and the University of Development Studies in Tamale, in the north, had another 5,107 students, bringing the overall total to 31,501 (see graph, next page). Despite this increase, notes Mr. Chambass, the universities still can admit only 25-30 per cent of those who qualify, even with very strict admissions standards.

Beyond some cosmetic improvements, the universities' infrastructures have not appreciably expanded over the same period. This has brought deteriorating conditions and quality, with too few facilities and faculty to handle the larger student body. Just to meet basic maintenance costs, much less any expansion, the universities have been obliged to increase various student charges.

Many students acknowledge the need for such charges, but bristle at their rising levels, arguing that those from poorer families are finding it difficult to meet the expense. While they accept "cost sharing" in principle, they insist that the government and other sources assume the lion's share.

Mr. Emmanuel Adjei Domson, president of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), believes that part of the problem lies with the economic policies prescribed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The government, he told a high-level National Education Forum in November 1999, has failed to sufficiently fund education "just to meet and satisfy World Bank and IMF conditionalities" limiting public expenditures. He asserted that higher education is "a public asset

for the public good," and that "education is not a commercial commodity but a social service and should never be operated on the principles and assumptions of market fundamentalism."

Trust fund

To help generate new financing for education, the NUGS had proposed for several years that a special trust fund be established. In January 1999 President Jerry Rawlings incorporated the proposal into his annual address to Parliament, and a technical committee subsequently recommended its broad outlines. Parliament currently is negotiating the specifics of the Ghana Education Trust Fund, designed to raise about 200 bn cedis ($54 mn) in additional educational financing annually.

How the fund's resources will be raised and allocated are not yet finalized, and certain aspects are controversial. Some have proposed raising the current 10 per cent value-added tax (VAT) by another 2 per cent, with half the additional amount going to the fund. A VAT increase, however, will likely be unpopular with the general public. The NUGS, while supporting the fund overall, has dissociated itself from the tax-increase proposal, suggesting instead that 1 per cent of the existing VAT be reallocated to education.

Less controversially, some have proposed new taxes on alcohol, tobacco, entertainment, hotels and other activities, levies on business earnings, an "educational lottery," and voluntary contributions, from individuals, churches, corporations, alumni associations and local communities.

Prominent individuals in Ghana's three impoverished northern regions, where enrolment is especially low, are organizing a comparable fund to benefit students in and from the north. Numerous local government assemblies are putting together scholarship programmes for particularly needy or disadvantaged students.

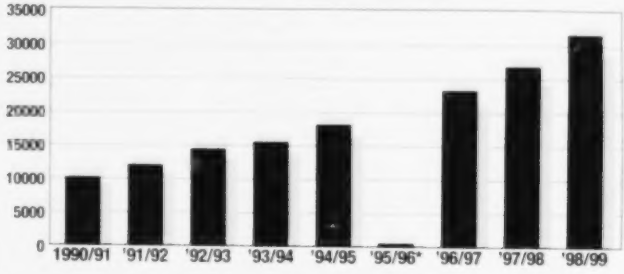
Only part of the national fund will go toward the universities. The Ministry of Education has proposed that 40 per cent of the fund's resources be allocated to basic education, with the remainder divided evenly between secondary and tertiary institutions. Parliament, however, may decide to alter the formula.

The government may be keen to use the trust fund to bail out the student loan scheme, which has accumulated a large debt due to unpaid loans (in part because university graduates have had a hard time finding suitable jobs). But many Ghanaian educators would prefer that a significant portion of the fund be used to upgrade infrastructure and hire more faculty.

Whatever the precise outcome, the process of launching the fund has set off a national dialogue over education financing. It is not limited to parliamentarians and government officials alone, but involves the NUGS and other student organizations, teachers' unions, school administrators and countless individuals concerned about the state of Ghana's schools. Women educators have used the opportunity to press for ways to improve female enrolment and performance rates, including at the senior secondary and university levels.

Mr. Abednego Kofi Agyepong, the Greater Accra regional chairman of the Ghana National Association of Teachers, sees this heightened public interest as one of the fund's most positive features: "The creation of awareness is a step in the right direction."

University enrolment in Ghana (number of students)



*Only 171 students were enrolled due to a year-long strike by lecturers.

Source: UN Africa Recovery from National Council for Tertiary Education data.

Mixed signals from donors

Since 1987, donors have contributed $65 mn to tertiary education in Ghana, including $45 mn from the World Bank for its 1993-98 Tertiary Education Project.

The World Bank, which currently has no active higher education undertaking in Ghana, judged its earlier project as only "marginally satisfactory." In its view, university enrolments grew too rapidly, without commensurate attention to sustainable funding mechanisms or a "coherent" overall programme beyond basic education. The latter criticism is shared by some Ghanaian experts. Ghana very much needs an overarching "master plan" for education which integrates its different components, argues Mr. Baffour Agyeman-Duah, associate executive director of the Centre for Democracy and Development, a non-governmental thinktank.

Once a "credible programme to provide good quality higher education at a sustainable cost" is in place, says Ms. Janet Leno, the World Bank's senior education specialist in Accra, "donors will be more than glad to come in to support this important effort."

Not all donors, however. Some officials have tended to question the value of higher education in Africa, stressing basic education instead. Such a simple counterposition stirs anger in Accra.

Ghanaians should be able to develop their talents to "the highest level," says Mr. Joseph Abbey, executive director of the Centre for Policy Analysis, a respected development policy research body. "Why should we, in sports, be able to compete with the best in the world, but when it comes to developing other talents, somebody says that it is inappropriate?" He wondered whether donors wanted Africa to remain dependent on foreign technical assistance, thus ensuring continued jobs for their own nationals.

Addressing the donors "who think that what is good for Africa is only basic education," Mr. Benneh asked in similar terms: "Do you want Africans to be just hewers of wood and drawers of water, or to advance?" Given Africa's development needs and the rapidly evolving world economy, he concluded, "We need higher education to move into the new era." ■

South Summit hits global economic gap

Havana conference assails "marginalization" of developing countries

Global economic issues dominated Africa's agenda at the Group of 77 (G-77) South Summit in Havana. The 10-14 April conference, the first-ever meeting of heads of state and government of the 133-member organization in its 36-year history, denounced the "increased marginalization" of developing countries in the world economy. The G-77 called on industrialized countries to open their markets to developing countries' exports, offer faster and more comprehensive debt relief, and increase official development assistance and foreign direct investment flows.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, whose country currently holds the chairmanship of the G-77, set the tone for the summit when he told delegates, "Globalization has failed to spur economic recovery, faster growth, greater employment opportunities and poverty eradication in developing countries. Rather it has exhibited a tendency to accentuate the income and welfare gaps between rich and poor among and within countries and regions." The North's reluctance to address the growing impoverishment in the South, he cautioned, "constitutes a major threat to international peace and security." Mr. Obasanjo called on the summit to "send a clear message" to industrialized countries about the urgent need for reform of the institutions and rules governing the world economy to benefit those left behind in the rush to market liberalization and freer trade.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan listens to Cuban President Fidel Castro, host of the South Summit.

Liberalization under fire

It is a message that has been delivered with increasing forcefulness by developing countries since the collapsed World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle in December 1999. The WTO failed in part because African and other developing countries revolted against the refusal of the major trading states to consider their reform proposals. Efforts to harness the global economy in the service of development picked up additional momentum at the 10th UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) conference in Bangkok in February (see *Africa Recovery*, April 2000).

South African President Thabo Mbeki, speaking in Havana on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that while the world economy has generated unprecedented prosperity in developed countries, the resulting "atomization of the family and the individual" has caused serious social problems in the North and produced opposition to further trade and market liberalization among US and European youth and workers. With protests scheduled for the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Washington, Mr. Mbeki urged the G-77 to "work for the mobilization of the masses of the countries of the North to sensitize them to the imperative to eliminate global poverty and inequality."

Greater UN role

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized the importance of governance issues, including respect for human rights, transparency in decision-making and public accountability, in creating an enabling environment for development. Globalization, he said in Havana, could make it possible for developing countries to move rapidly out of poverty, "but this depends on our success in making the global economy more equitable, by underpinning it with rules based on shared social objectives and institutions in which the South is fairly represented.... First and foremost among these institutions should be a renewed and strengthened United Nations."

The G-77, in turn, expressed "deep concern" over the reduction of funding for UN development programmes and the UN's diminished voice in debates over world economic issues. The summit called for an expansion of the Security Council membership and an end to the veto power of the five permanent members. The heads of state and government rejected the widely-debated concept of a "right" to humanitarian intervention — external involvement in the affairs of another state in pursuit of humanitarian objectives — as inconsistent with the UN Charter. They affirmed that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states should remain the basis for international relations.

Alarm about Africa

The summit expressed "deep alarm" about the economic decline in many sub-Saharan African countries and called for urgent measures to reduce Africa's debt burden and increase market access for the region's exports. "Poverty in Africa has now reached intolerable levels," the Havana Declaration noted, "with negative consequences for the stability of most countries and regions of the continent." The conference also called on developed countries to adopt a package of special measures to benefit all least developed countries, including tariff-free access to Northern markets, increased official development assistance and eased admission and integration into the WTO.

In contrast to the chilly reception given the protests at the WTO Seattle meeting by the trade ministers of most developing countries, the G-77 leaders embraced US protesters trying to disrupt the IMF and World Bank meetings. Speaking to reporters in Havana on 15 April, Nigerian Ambassador to the UN Arthur Mbanefo said the heads of state "give their full backing and solidarity to the demonstrators. I personally support whatever demonstrations make the IMF and the World Bank think positively about our problems." ■

A UN for the new millennium

Secretary-General identifies key opportunities and goals

By **Frehiwot Bekele**

On the eve of a new millennium, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has identified key opportunities, obligations and challenges facing the global community and proposed concrete actions to "to lift people's spirits and improve their lives." Mr. Annan's report, *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*, will be debated by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit, 6-8 September in New York.

UN volunteer corps will help train groups in developing countries in uses of new information technologies.

"The relevance of the United Nations and its capacity to inspire have in no way diminished since its founding," Mr. Annan states. "If anything, they have increased as people have become interconnected in new ways and the need for global collective responsibility has become more widely felt. But we need to ask ourselves what kind of United Nations leaders are prepared to support — in deeds as well as words."

Three tasks loom above all others, he states: to ensure that peoples everywhere live free from want and from fear, and that future generations inherit a healthy planet and global environment. Underlying these goals are the challenges posed by the deep poverty of over half the world's population, the raging HIV/AIDS epidemic, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the destruction of the ecosystem and the environmental resources humanity needs to survive.

The forces of globalization are seen as overarching, often contributing to problems but with the potential to be harnessed for economic development and social well-being. "The central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people instead of leaving billions behind in squalor," the Secretary-General states.

Special provision for Africa

Mr. Annan's report pays particular attention to sub-Saharan Africa. "Nowhere is a global commitment to poverty reduction needed more than in Africa south of the Sahara," says the Secretary-General, "because no region of the world endures greater human suffering." After outlining the region's fundamental problems — low GDP growth rates and per capita income, debilitating external debt burdens, low agricultural productivity, armed conflicts, poor governance and alarming HIV infection rates — he urges the Millennium Summit to "make special provision for the needs of Africa and give our full support to Africans in their struggle to overcome the continent's problems."

As a first step toward his "millennium goals," the Secretary-General announced several initiatives the UN is taking in partnership with private enterprise. Under the Health InterNetwork, some 10,000 "on-line sites" will be set up and operated in hospitals and clinics in developing countries to provide Internet access to up-to-date medical information tailored to the needs of specific countries and regions. Through the UN Information Technology Service (UNITeS), a consortium of "high-tech volunteer corps" from industrialized countries will train groups in developing countries in the uses and opportunities of information technology. The Secretary-General, with the heads of the UN Development Programme and the International Labour Organization, is also convening a "high-level policy network" to propose ways to reduce the extremely high levels of youth unemployment.

Meeting concrete goals

In addition, the Secretary-General urges leaders to meet goals that already have been set at major UN conferences in the 1990s: halving extreme poverty by 2015; improving living conditions for 100 million slum dwellers by 2020; halving the proportion of people lacking access to safe drinking water by 2015; ensuring primary education for all by 2015 and closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005; and reducing by 2005 the rate of HIV infection of people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the most affected countries. Also emphasized are the need for open access to the developed world's markets for goods produced by the least developed countries, expansion of the heavily indebted poor countries initiative so that more countries can benefit from debt relief, and "more generous" levels of official development assistance.

To sustain the environment, the Secretary-General notes that in addition to preventing the degradation of fertile soils, fresh water, the ozone layer and biodiversity, halting climate change is a vital necessity. Emissions of "greenhouse" gases which cause global warning must be reduced. This can be done with the use of cleaner, more efficient technologies and non-fossil fuels. He calls on governments to adopt and implement the 1997 UN Kyoto Protocol that binds industrialized countries to reduce emissions by 2002. By using the UN's system of "green accounting," governments can easily monitor activities that are good for people and the environment and those that pollute or degrade the planet.

To improve peace and security, the Secretary-General calls for strengthening peace operations, targeted sanctions against rogue groups and a halt to illicit arms trafficking. The new International Criminal Court, he stresses, is essential for ending "the culture of impunity" that has existed for those committing gross human rights violations.

Within the UN, the Secretary-General points to the need to reform the Security Council so that it is viewed by the world's peoples as democratic and representative. "I believe that ... all these things are achievable, if we have the will to achieve them," the Secretary-General concludes. "In inspiring and coordinating those efforts, a renewed United Nations will have a vital and exalting role to play." ■

New law to boost US-Africa trade

from page 11

The legislation leaves intact the full array of tariff and non-tariff barriers to imports deemed threatening to domestic suppliers. Although South Africa is one of 41 sub-Saharan countries that currently qualify for duty-free access to the US under the GSP, for example, certain of its steel products nevertheless have been kept out of the US market through "anti-dumping" measures, ostensibly designed to protect domestic goods from unfair external competition.

The more business-oriented eligibility requirements persuaded a number of African and US labour, church, environment and development groups that the bill was designed more to lock African economies into trade and market liberalization policies than to assist African development objectives. "In general terms, this bill favours US business and multinational corporate interests, rather than African grassroots communities," said Mr. Larry Goodwin, director of the Washington-based Africa Faith and Justice Network, one of a number of non-governmental organizations that opposed the bill.

Skeptics note that the bill fails to provide trade preferences for many African products, including agricultural and mining commodities, which have long been the region's dominant exports. The advantages obtained by eliminating quotas on textiles and apparel could prove fleeting, they argue, since all textile quotas are to be phased out worldwide in 2005 in favour of World Trade Organization rules. "This really is the basic flaw," wrote Mr. Tetteh Hormeku, a trade expert at the Ghana-based Africa Secretariat of the non-governmental Third World Network. The Africa trade bill "is not really about Africans but about American business and competition with Europe." ■

AFRICA AGENDA

FUTURE EVENTS

9-14 July 2000, Durban (South Africa) — The XIII International AIDS Conference, organized by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, the International AIDS Society and others. Tel (27-31) 301-0400, fax 301-0191, e-mail <aids2000@aids2000.com>, Web site <www.aids2000.com>.

18-19 July, Lomé (Togo) — Regional training seminar for women entrepreneurs in information technology, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Contact Peter Da Costa, tel (251-1) 51.58.26, e-mail <dacosta@igc.apc.org>.

21-23 July, Okinawa (Japan) — G8 Summit. Web site <www.g8kyushu-okinawa.go.jp>.

1-3 August, Hyatt Fair Lakes (Virginia, US) — 9th Annual Africa Telecommunications and Information Technology Conference. Fax (1-703) 691-3572, e-mail <afcom@afcomnet.com>, Web site <www.afcomnet.com>.

4-7 September, Mbour (Senegal) — FAO Expert Consultation on Fish Technology in Africa. Tel (39-06) 5705-3259, fax 5705-3924.

6-8 September, New York (US) — United Nations Millennium Summit of Heads of State and Government

10-12 September, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — Eighth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance. Contact Peter Da Costa of the ECA, tel (251-1) 51.58.26, e-mail <dacosta@igc.apc.org>.

18-21 September, Rome (Italy) — 26th session of FAO Committee on Food Security. Tel (39-06) 5705-3259, fax 5705-3924.

8-17 October, Antananarivo (Madagascar) — Facing the New Millennium: Gender in Africa and the African Diaspora — Retrospection and Prospects. Contact Obioma Nnaemeka of Indiana University, tel (1-317) 278-2038, 274-7611 or 274-0062; fax 274-2347; e-mail <nnaemeka@iupui.edu>; Web site <www.iupui.edu/~aaws/>.

10-13 October, Bangkok (Thailand) — International Conference on Health Research for Development, organized by the World Health Organization, World Bank, the Global Forum for Health Research and Council for Health Research for Development. Contact conference secretariat, tel (41-22) 917-8554, fax 917-8015, e-mail <conference2000@cohred.ch>, Web site <www.conference2000.ch>.

22-26 October, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — "AIDS: The Greatest Leadership Challenge" is the theme of the 2nd African Development Forum, organized by ECA, UNAIDS and the World Bank. Contact Peter Da Costa of the ECA, tel (251-1) 51.58.26, e-mail <dacosta@igc.apc.org>.

31 August-7 September 2001, South Africa — UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Contact Conference Secretariat, tel (41-22) 917-9290, fax 917-9022, e-mail <husbands@un.org>.

13-20 May 2001, Brussels (Belgium) — Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries. Contact Carine Richard-Van Maele, tel (41-22) 907-5816, fax 907-0057/0043.

AFRICA BOOKS

Africa's Emerging Securities Markets: Developments in Financial Infrastructure by Robert A. Clark (Quorum Books, Westport, Connecticut, US; 1998; 248 pp; $69.50)

The Politics of Economic Restructuring and Democracy in Africa by Obioma M. Iheduru (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, US; 1999; 184 pp; $49.95)

Institutions and Reform in Africa: The Public Choice Perspective by John Mukum Mbaku (Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, US; 1997; 304 pp; $69.50)

The Rise of Multipartyism and Democracy in the Context of Global Change: The Case of Africa by Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo (Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, US; 1998; 168 pp; $55)

African Guerrillas, ed. Christopher Clapham (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, US; 1999; 224 pp; hb $39.95, pb $17.95)

The African Studies Companion: A Resource Guide and Directory (second and revised edition) by Hans Zell and Cecile Lomer (Hans Zell Publishers, New Providence, New Jersey, US; 1997; 276 pp; $75)

Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa, eds. William G. Martin and Michael O. West (University of Illinois Press, Champaign, Illinois, US; 1999; 240 pp; hb $44.95, pb $19.95)

Exodus within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement by David A. Korn (Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, US; 1999; 160 pp; $22.95)

U.N. Jigsaw: An Easy Reader about Life and Work at the United Nations by Wilfrid Grey (Vintage Press, New York, US; 2000; 365 pp; $13.95)

Ecology of an African Rain Forest: Logging in Kibale and the Conflict Between Conservation and Exploitation by Thomas T. Struhsaker (University Press of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, US; 1999; 432 pp; $39.95, hb, $29.95 pb)

Evolving Land Rights, Policy and Tenure in Africa, eds. Camilla Toulmin and Julian Quan (International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK; 2000; 336 pp; £12.50)

Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence by Egosha E. Osaghae (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, US; 1998; 368 pp; $39.95 hb, $18.95 pb)

Eaters of the Dry Season: Circular Labor Migration in the West African Sahel by David Rain (Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, US; 1999; 266 pp; $65)

Culture and Sustainable Development: Investing in Cultural and Natural Endowments, eds. Ismail Serageldin and Joan Martin-Brown (World Bank, Washington, DC, US; 1999; 208 pp; $22)

AFRICA IN BRIEF

Human rights critical to development, says UNDP

Human rights are at the centre of development, argues the *Human Development Report 2000*, published annually since 1990 by the UN Development Programme (UNDP). "Human rights are not, as have sometimes been argued, a reward of development," asserts UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown in his introduction to the study. "Rather they are critical to achieving it." Respect for human rights and sound development policies, he notes, "make up a self-reinforcing virtuous circle."

As it does each year, the report ranks countries according to a "human development index" which combines life expectancy, education and per capita income indices. Out of 174 countries ranked, only two sub-Saharan countries, the Seychelles and Mauritius, were among the top 100. Of the 25 countries with the lowest ratings, 24 are African.

While there have been discussions over the years — sometimes controversial — about possible ways of formulating an index related to human rights, the report itself does not attempt to do so. It does note progress in various regions to better institutionalize human rights monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. After adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1981, an African Human Rights Commission was formed in 1987 and in 1998 countries agreed to establish an African Human Rights Court, although it has not yet started functioning. Out of 52 countries on the continent, 16 have ratified five of the six major international human rights conventions and another 21 have ratified all six — which several highly industrialized countries have not yet done. ■

South African state enterprises to invest $1 bn in Africa

Two South African state enterprises, the power-generating firm Eskom and transport giant Transnet, plan to invest more than $1 bn in other African countries over the next five years. Public Enterprises Minister Jeff Radebe announced in late May that Eskom expected to invest some $445 mn in West Africa, $86 mn in North and Central Africa, $245 mn in East Africa and $240 mn in Southern Africa. The investments represent a major expansion for the company, which already generates about half of sub-Saharan Africa's electricity.

Transnet's rail division, Spoornet, will actively participate in the leasing of Zambian and Tanzanian railways when bidding for management contracts is opened later this year. The company has begun talks with the Nigerian, Ghanaian and Guinean governments about involvement in their railways. ■

OAU commission: Rwanda genocide was "preventable"

An international commission investigating the 1994 slaughter of over 800,000 people in Rwanda issued a report on 7 July describing the genocide as "preventable" and condemning the UN Security Council for refusing to intervene. The study, initiated by the Organization of African Unity, denounced France for support of the ethnic Hutu-dominated government responsible for the murders and for aiding the "genocidaires'" escape from Rwanda after their defeat by Tutsi guerrillas. The US was blamed for blocking international intervention: "The US made sure that no such force would ever reach Rwanda even after it was known beyond question" that genocide was occurring.

Speaking to reporters at UN headquarters on 7 July Mr. Stephen Lewis, a panel member and the former Canadian ambassador to the UN, said Rwanda deserves massive assistance, "particularly from those countries which betrayed Rwanda when it needed the world most."

The seven-member commission, chaired by former Botswana President Ketumile Masire (see *Africa Recovery*, August 1998), also singled out Belgium, the UN Secretariat and the Roman Catholic Church for condemnation. The report, *Rwanda: the Preventable Genocide*, is available on-line at <www.oau-oua.org>. It follows the 15 December 1999, release of an independent study requested by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, on the UN's failed response to the killings. ■

Concern about Africa at Social Summit review

Africa has not fared well in promoting social progress over the last five years, according to a UN General Assembly special session held 26-30 June in Geneva to assess and advance the social development agenda. The session marked the follow-up to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, which included a specific commitment to promote social development in Africa and the least developed countries.

Countries participating in the special session agreed that progress so far has been disappointing. They agreed that poor terms of trade, a continued fall-off in official development assistance and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have all played roles in preventing African countries from meeting the goals set in 1995.

In addition to setting a global target of 2015 for reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and endorsing a global employment strategy, the special session urged specific measures that could have ramifications for African development efforts. It agreed that more resources are needed for social development and that there should be improved market access for African exports, including quota- and tariff-free treatment for such goods. It agreed that structural adjustment programmes should not adversely affect social programmes, and that the International Monetary Fund should ensure that programmes designed to address economic crises do not lead to sharp cuts in social spending.

An additional $8 bn a year for 15 years would be necessary to achieve universal primary education, the special session found, in effect putting a price tag to the global targets endorsed two months earlier at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal.

The session agreed that there should be deeper and improved debt relief for low- and middle-income countries and that in times of financial crisis, a "debt standstill" should be considered. It also urged a "rigorous analysis" of proposals for new and innovative sources of funding, including the suggestion for an international tax on currency transactions, commonly known as the "Tobin tax."

The 25 African countries most affected by HIV/AIDS were encouraged to set time-bound targets for reducing infection levels, such as a target of 2005 for reducing the infection rate among young people by 25 per cent. The session also supported efforts to make low-cost medicines available to people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as for medicines for other diseases prevalent in developing countries.

— Daniel Shepard, Geneva

AFRICA WATCH

MALARIA

'Roll back' campaign launched

Malaria takes the lives of 700,000 African children annually and costs the region $3-12 bn each year in lost revenue, says a joint study of the UN's World Health Organization (WHO), the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Harvard University. It was presented to 20 African heads of state at a conference launching a "Roll Back Malaria" campaign in Abuja, Nigeria, on 25 April.

The campaign aims to ensure that everyone at risk of the disease has access to insecticide-treated mosquito netting by 2005. At present, just 2 per cent of African children are protected by the nets. Wider use of such screens, researchers say, could cut the infection rate by half. "Roll Back Malaria aims to help African families create a mosquito-free zone in the home," said campaign manager Dr. Awash Teklehaimanot. The programme is also working to improve access to diagnosis and treatment and to develop better mechanisms for the detection of epidemics. The WHO report put the cost of treating malaria at just $1-8 per person per year.

WHO Executive Director Dr. David Navarro called for an increase in spending on malaria from the current $130 mn annually to $1 bn, primarily in Africa. "Malaria is taking costly bites out of Africa," he said in Abuja. "It is feasting on the health and development of African children and draining the life out of African economies." ■

BURUNDI

Women strengthen peace talks

In an important breakthrough for efforts to include women in peacemaking and nation-building, a panel of experts on gender issues from South Africa, Uganda, Eritrea and Guatemala briefed the parties to the Burundi peace talks on 23 June. The briefing, organized by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), was conducted at the request of the Burundi peace facilitation team, headed by former South African President Nelson Mandela. The panelists drew upon their experience in resolving conflicts in their home countries to emphasize the important role women can play in fashioning durable peace. In 1999 UNIFEM supported a successful effort by seven Burundian women to win permanent observer status at the ongoing negotiations, which have been held in Arusha, Tanzania, since 1998.

Ms. Ruth Perry, a member of Mr. Mandela's facilitation team and Liberia's transitional head of state in 1995-97, noted that initially the Burundian negotiators had "categorically refused to include women in the negotiations. This breakthrough must be given immediate support to develop a wider process of engaging women throughout Burundi on issues relating to their security, their inclusion and their human rights." ■

OAU, MILLENNIUM ASSEMBLY

African intellectuals' appeal

Despite the pervasive negative external image of Africa, the region has enormous potential, based on its extensive human and natural resources, concluded a conference of African intellectuals held in Dakar, Senegal, on 22 June. That potential simply needs to be "developed with commitment and exploited to the benefit of the people," declared the meeting, organized by the Independent Commission for Africa, a pan-African network headed by Mr. Albert Tévoédjrè, a former deputy director-general of the International Labour Organization and until last year Benin's minister of planning. "The shortcomings and crises that one finds in parts of the continent should not be considered representative of the continent as a whole," said the declaration, which will be presented to the July summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity and the September Millennium Assembly of the UN.

Specifically, the group emphasizes that Africa must give priority to education, health and access to new information technologies, including through creating an African Technology Institute. It also proposes a Julius Nyerere Leadership Prize, named after the late Tanzanian leader and awarded to exceptional Africans who demonstrate "positive, non-corrupt leadership." ■

CAPACITY BUILDING

Stemming the brain drain

The absence of opportunities at home and growing demand for skills abroad has turned the African "brain drain" into a flood. That was the message delivered to African finance ministers in Lusaka on 26 June at a regional meeting sponsored by The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). Foundation General Secretary Soumana Sako estimated that Africa loses 20,000 professionals annually to jobs overseas, draining the continent of technical and managerial skills and increasing governments' dependence on costly non-African "experts" for the design and implementation of development programmes.

The Lusaka workshop was the second major meeting this year on ways to stem the loss of African intellectual capacity. In February, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held a three-day conference in Addis Abeba to devise ways to keep African professionals at home. According to ECA, some 27,000 African intellectuals emigrated to developed countries between 1960 and 1975. Between 1985 and 1990 the number jumped to 60,000, and has averaged 20,000 annually ever since. Both the Addis Ababa and Lusaka meetings called on African governments to improve conditions for indigenous professionals and better harness their skills for development. ■

APPOINTMENTS

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed ***Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy*** *(Senegal), left, as his Representative in the Central African Republic and head of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Central Africa (BONUCA), which was established in February to succeed the UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). At the time of his new appointment, Mr. Sy was the Secretary-General's Representative in Burundi.*

Mr. Jean Arnault *(France) is now the Secretary-General's Representative and Head of the UN Office in Burundi (UNOB). He was formerly the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).*

Mr. Abdoulie Janneh *(Gambia) is the new Director of the UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa. He served earlier as UNDP Resident Representative in Ghana and Niger.*